COBB'S ISLAND, VIRGINIA

The Last Sentinel

by

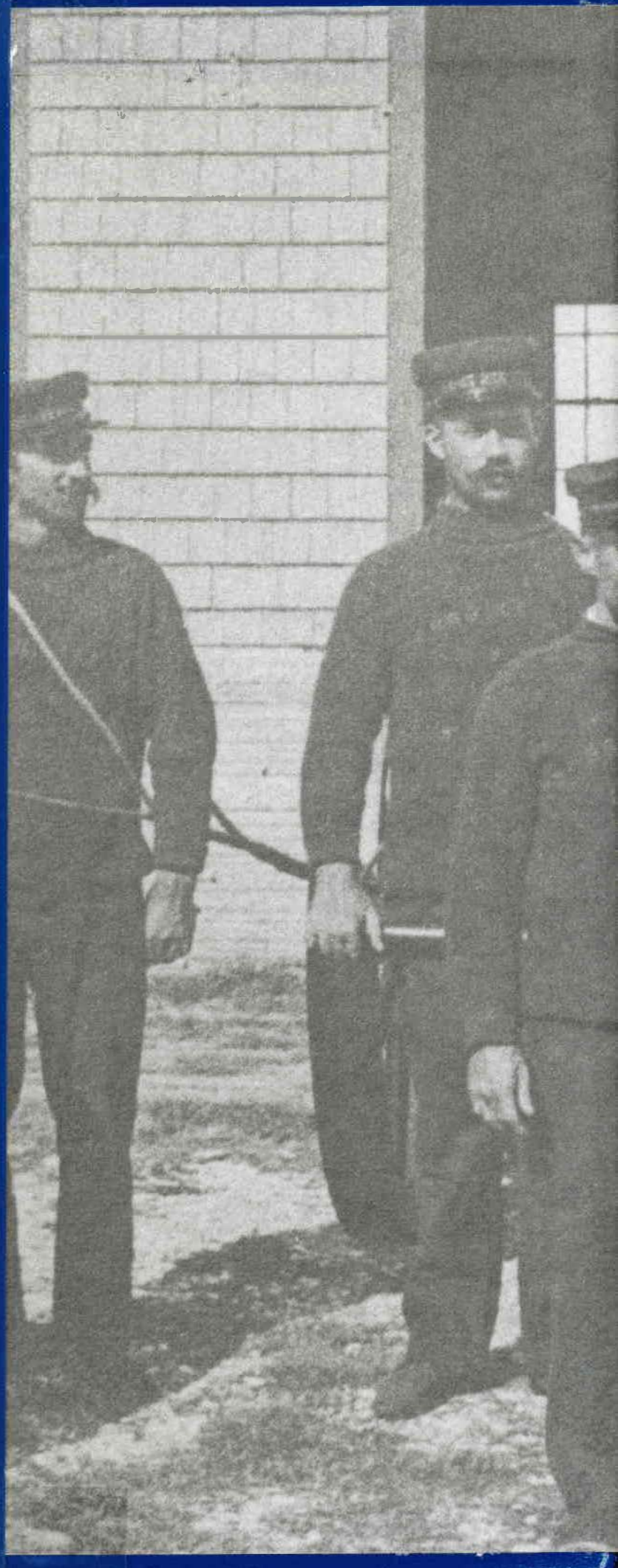
Ron M. Kagawa and J. Richard Kellam

Including
"The Cobb's Island Story"
reprinted from Once a Shoreman
by Amine Cosby Kellam

Cobb's Island is one of Virginia's barrier islands that extend some seventy miles from Maryland's Eastern Shore to the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay forming a nearly complete set that remain in their fully natural state as plant and animal sanctuaries. Between the barrier islands and the mainland of Virginia's Eastern Shore lies a matrix of salt marshes and tidal wetlands that form one of the most ecologically diverse and environmentally important ecosystems in the world. Cobb's Island lies across the Great Machipongo Inlet from Hog Island and is comprised of approximately thirteen hundred acres of upland with an overall length of about four miles. Today, with the notable exception of Wallops, Chincoteague, and Assateague Islands, the majority of the Virginia barrier islands are owned and protected by The Nature Conservancy's Virginia Coast Reserve, or are safeguarded as federal natural areas.

In 1875–76, the United States Life Saving Service constructed its first facility on Cobb's Island. The station was one of approximately twenty-six lifesaving stations of an identical architectural pattern that would be constructed throughout the Mid-Atlantic. The facility that we know today as Cobb's Island Station is the only surviving example of the 1936-era architectural pattern stations that were simultaneously constructed on the Virginia barrier islands. Officially decommissioned by the United States Coast Guard in 1964, the station remained abandoned for almost thirty-five years, was occasionally vandalized, and slowly descended into almost irreparable decay. In 1998, the station was moved in two pieces from its original site on Cobb's Island, ten water miles across Mockhorn Bay to the town of Oyster, Virginia. Coincident with the move, the station was fully renovated, upgraded to modern building codes, and reopened as a community and public facility. On Saturday, 9 June 2001, nearly one thousand people came to the Eastern Shore town of Oyster, Virginia (population less than one hundred) to celebrate the renewal of Cobb's Island Life Saving Station.

Cobb's Island, Virginia: The Last Sentinel offers a humble glimpse of the place that was and remains Cobb's Island. It is a simple record based on written and spoken narratives, contemporary and historical photographs and drawings.



Dorchester County Public Library
303 Gay Street
Cambridge, Maryland 21613

SHBK
NASDAQ
LISTED

As part of Shore Financial Corporation's ongoing commitment to the Eastern Shore, we are proud to sponsor the effort to preserve the history, heritage, and traditions of our community.

We are pleased that the proceeds of this book will benefit the Eastern Shore of Virginia Chamber of Commerce.

EASTERN SHORE OF VIRGINIA
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

In the end, our society will be defined not only by what we create,
but by what we refuse to destroy.

—John C. Sawhill

The greatest achievement of the human spirit is to live up to one's opportunities,
and to make the most of one's resources.

—Vauvenargues

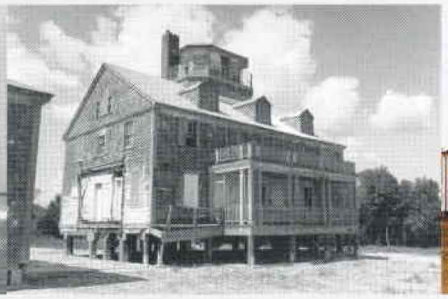
THE
DONNING COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

COBB'S ISLAND, VIRGINIA

The Last Sentinel

by

Ron M. Kagawa and J. Richard Kellam



Including
"The Cobb's Island Story"
reprinted from Once a Shoreman
by Amine Cosby Kellam

Dedication

Dedicated to the honor and courage of the descendants of the Cobb Family, the United States Life Saving Service, the United States Coast Guard and those who today, steward the future of Cobb's Island. Thank you to Connie K. Kellam and Jill E. Yutan—we love you both.

Copyright © 2003 by Ron Matthew Kagawa and James Richard Kellam

All rights reserved, including the right to reproduce this work in any form whatsoever without permission in writing from the publisher, except for brief passages in connection with a review. For information, please write:

The Donning Company Publishers
184 Business Park Drive, Suite 206
Virginia Beach, VA 23462

Steve Mull, General Manager
Barbara B. Buchanan, Office Manager
Marshall McClure, Design Production Coordinator
Dennis Walton, Project Director
Anne Cordray, Project Research Coordinator
Richard A. Horwege, Senior Editor
Jeremy Gray, Graphic Designer
Dan Carr, Imaging Technician
Mary Ellen Wheeler, Proofreader/Editorial Assistant
Scott Rule, Director of Marketing
Travis Gallup, Marketing Coordinator

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Kagawa, Ron M. (Ron Matthew)
Cobb's Island, Virginia : the last sentinel / by Ron M. Kagawa and J. Richard Kellam.
p. cm.
"Including The Cobb's Island story, reprinted from Once a shoreman by Amine Cosby Kellam."
Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.
ISBN 1-57864-211-6 (alk. paper)
1. Lifesaving stations—Virginia—Cobb Island—History. 2. Cobb Island (Va.)—History. I. Kellam, J. Richard (James Richard) II. Title.

VK1325.C63K34 2003
363.12'381'0975649—dc22

2003055348

Printed in the United States of America

Contents

Introduction 6

Chapter 1
Recollections: The Cobb's Island Story 8
Reprinted from *Once a Shoreman*;
The Donning Company Publishers, Inc., 1986
by Amine Cosby Kellam

Chapter 2
Traditions: Lifesaving and the Virginia Barrier Islands 16

Chapter 3
Transformations: The Cobb's Island Life Saving Stations 27

Section I
1875–1934: Forefathers 28

Section II
1935–1964: Birth 52

Section III
1965–1997: Lean Times 76

Section IV
1997–2001: Renewal 84

Endnotes 120
Bibliography 122
Credits 125
Index 126
The Authors 128

Introduction

This project began as an ongoing conversation among a few longtime friends and colleagues in the fall of 2000. Over time, this discourse has become focused upon the complexity of human relationships to the landscape, its occupation and modification. There are great legacies to be considered and recorded on the Eastern Shore of Virginia that will contribute in significant ways to future generations. *Cobb's Island, Virginia: The Last Sentinel* seeks the potential of a significant place by looking to the past.

This book offers a humble glimpse of the place that was and remains Cobb's Island. It is a simple record based on written and spoken narratives, contemporary and historical photographs and drawings. The record is conceived as a selected series of attendant moments, significant and otherwise seemingly obscure that contribute to the legacy of the place.

The original land patent for what we know today as Cobb's Island was granted by George II of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, on 21 August 1734. As approved by Virginia's Provincial Governor William Gooch, the patent of "one small island commonly called the Great Sand Shole containing eighty-six acres, one rood and thirty-six pole lying and being by the seaside of Northampton County and rivers and water courses therein contained"[1] was granted to Mr. William Satchell and Mr. Andrew John Fabin.

Courtesy of Vladimir Gavrilovic

On 11 March 1839, Nathan Cobb Sr. purchased what was then known as Great Sand Shoal Island from Mr. William Fitchett and Ms. Elizabeth Fitchett, granddaughter of Mr. Andrew John Fabin.[2] Upon moving to the island, which would in time become his family's namesake, Nathan Cobb Sr. built a modest house and supported his family through establishment of the Cobb's Salvaging Company, a wrecking business dedicated to assisting shipwrecked vessels along the coast and barrier islands. Nathan Cobb Sr. and his family also began a market hunting operation and opened a gaming lodge that was destined to become known as one of the finest and most hospitable on the Eastern Seaboard. A number of notable guests including President of the Confederacy Jefferson Davis and Virginia Governor Fitzhugh Lee as well as Army Captain Frederick Grant, son of Union General and U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant, were known to have patronized the seaside resort. During its later halcyon days the resort was passed to succeeding generations of the Cobb family before its ultimate demise in the late 1800s when a succession of ocean storms forced the family to all but abandon permanent residence of the island. Thereafter, the Cobb family continued to service hunting and fishing parties on Cobb's Island and throughout the other nearby barrier islands.

"I would rather stay here and drown than go with you. . . . My chances are better here, . . . "[3] These are the last words attributed to George Cobb during the now infamous 23 August 1933 Storm that battered the Eastern Shore. Presumed lost, his body was never recovered.

The United States Life Saving Service and United States Coast Guard are inseparable from the modern evolution of Virginia's barrier islands. They form a locally prominent and nationally significant heritage that connects both public and private service, sacrifice and human tragedy with civic consciousness. At Metompkin Inlet, the stationkeeper recorded the following 23 August 1933 log entry:

. . . telephone test made; line out of order. Failed to get any answer north or south . . . 6 AM. Called all hands to stand by and be ready to do everything possible to save station, boats, gear, and equipment due to very high seas that commenced to break on station premises . . . 7:15 AM the seas at this time running heavy over premises and with wind blowing at hurricane force swept all outbuildings off the premises . . . 9:00 AM station commenced to shake and was broken in half by the big seas—the kitchen going in one direction, the main building in the other. At once gave the order for all hands to abandon station and rush to power surfboat made fast to rear of station. Proceeded to Mr. Lang's dock in Accomack, Va., the only place available for safety . . . all drills and inspections omitted due to gale and being forced to abandon station. . . .[4]

In 1875–76, the United States Life Saving Service constructed its first facility on Cobb's Island. The station was one of approximately twenty-six life saving stations of an identical architectural pattern that would be constructed throughout the Mid-Atlantic. The facility that we know today as Cobb's Island Station is the only surviving example of the 1936-era architectural pattern stations that were simultaneously constructed on the Virginia barrier islands. The station was officially decommissioned by the United States Coast Guard in 1964. For almost thirty-five years the station remained abandoned, was occasionally vandalized, and slowly descended into almost irreparable decay. In 1998, the station was moved in two pieces from its original site on Cobb's Island, ten water miles across Mockhorn Bay to the town of Oyster, Virginia. Coincident with the move, the station was fully renovated, upgraded to modern building codes, and reopened as a community and public facility. On Saturday, 9 June 2001, nearly one thousand people came to the Eastern Shore town of Oyster, Virginia (population less than one hundred) to celebrate the renewal of Cobb's Island Life Saving Station.

There are approximately 270 barrier islands along the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Coasts. Virginia's barrier islands extend some seventy miles from Maryland's Eastern Shore to the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, forming a nearly complete set that remain in their fully natural state as plant and animal sanctuaries. Between the barrier islands and the mainland of Virginia's Eastern Shore lies a matrix of salt marshes and tidal wetlands that form one of the world's most ecologically diverse and environmentally important ecosystems. Cobb's Island lies across the Great Machipongo Inlet from Hog Island and is comprised of approximately thirteen hundred acres of upland with an overall length of about four miles. Today, with the notable exception of Wallops, Chincoteague, and Assateague Islands, the majority of the Virginia barrier islands are owned and protected by The Nature Conservancy's Virginia Coast Reserve, or are safeguarded as federal natural areas.

Courtesy of Vladimir Gavrilovic

Chapter 1

Recollections: The Cobb's Island Story

Reprinted from *Once a Shoreman* by Amine Cosby Kellam
The Donning Company Publishers, 1986

As one looks at Cobb's Island, now nothing more than a deserted beach on the Virginia coast, it is almost impossible to realize that a hunting and fishing resort flourished there more than a hundred years ago. Where guests once played croquet on a green lawn, boats now chug, for it is the main channel. The island was virtually leveled by the great October storm of 1896, and nothing there remains to remind one of days gone by. This majestic, crescent-shaped island was not always desolate, quiet, and uninhabited. Before the sea washed most of it away, it was a lively place. There is a story to be told about Cobb's Island and about the Cobb family, a family who laughed, loved, and worked on this small Atlantic island during the last part of the nineteenth century.

Captain George Cobb in 1932.

Courtesy of Rick Kellam

There is no one alive today who knew Nathan Cobb, a Yankee who developed the island and made it into one of the most popular watering places in the Old Dominion for over fifty years. The man and the island were very much a part of each other. In order for the story of Cobb's Island to unfold, it is necessary to know something of Nathan Cobb, to realize why he bought the island, and to follow the events that led to the island's popularity. In order to do this we need to go back more than one hundred and fifty years when Nathan was thirty-nine years old.

In 1837 Nathan was happily engaged in the shipbuilding business in Eastham, Massachusetts, with his father Elkanah, and his two brothers, Elkanah and Scotter, when it was learned that his frail wife, Nancy Doane, had tuberculosis. His doctor suggested that moving to a warmer climate might prolong her life. Nathan accordingly sold his interest in the business, bought a schooner, and headed south with his wife and their three young sons, Nathan, Warren, and Albert. They carried with them tools, guns, food, furniture, clothing, and sawn lumber for a house. The trip from Cape Cod was uneventful until they reached the Virginia capes. Then a bad storm forced them into an inlet near Oyster on the seaside of the Eastern Shore. The Cobbs, drenched

with water and shivering from cold, were greeted so warmly by the natives that they fell in love with the Shore, and decided to make it their home. Neighbors helped them build a modest house, and Nathan set up a little store in the village.

Everything went well for the next year or so. The store prospered. Nancy seemed to gain strength, and the boys were happy in their new surroundings. Then Nathan became bored. He could not bear seeing his schooner lying idle in the harbor, and he could not forget how close he came to being shipwrecked on the shoals. He knew what he wanted to do, for in a day when there were no lighthouses and when sailing still dominated navigation, many ships were driven onto the shoals during heavy storms, and loss of life was common. Nathan's Yankee shrewdness told him he could develop a profitable salvage business if he could locate near the hazardous shoals.

Nathan wanted an island, and he knew the one he wanted. He had been there many times. It was Great Sand Shoal Island, only eight miles from Oyster. This key-shaped island had been a grant to William Satchell and Andrew John Fabin by the provincial governor in 1794 and was still in the family. The heirs, William and Elizabeth Fitchett, did not seem to regard the island highly, but Nathan did.

One day as Nathan walked the island beach he noticed a strange brown substance seeping from the sand. It resembled semi-liquid brown sugar. However, when he tasted it, it was salty. He decided it might be salt, a precious commodity in those days. After wrangling three large iron kettles from the mainland, he returned to the island and started boiling the liquid. It *was* salt.

On March 11, 1839, Nathan purchased Great Sand Shoal Island for $1,050. There is a family story that part of the payment was a wagonload of salt, but the deed makes no mention of this consideration.

Nathan sold the store, dismantled their home and moved the family to the island, which soon became known as Cobb's. Nancy did not long survive the move. She died in 1840 and was put to rest in the little island cemetery which was to become the resting place for many sailors drowned at sea and finally Captain Cobb himself.

A few years after Nancy's death, on September 13, 1842, Nathan married Esther Carpenter, a strong, capable woman who loved the out-of-doors and who delighted in providing her stalwart stepsons with good food and excellent housekeeping. It was a good marriage, which lasted twenty-two years. After Esther died, Nathan married Mrs. Nancy Richardson on July 5, 1866. Their sons, in turn, followed their father in matrimony and brought their wives to the island to live. The four families were congenial and life on the island was good.

Nathan salvaged his first ship soon after moving to the island. It was the *Columbia*, a schooner en route from Charleston, South Carolina, to Baltimore loaded with lumber. Six men and the Captain's wife were aboard. The cargo and crew were all saved. During the years that followed, the Cobbs salvaged thirty-seven vessels and helped to save thirty-five lives.

Nathan became an expert at judging the wind and the tide. In rescue operations each of his sons had his own position in a "five-handed" boat that had once been a Cape Cod fishing boat. Using anchors, hawsers, block and tackle, horses and sail, the Cobbs would move a ship off the shoals inches at a time. Until a lifesaving station was established at Cobb's Island in the 1870s, the Cobbs often risked their own lives to rescue the crew of sailing vessels, which had been driven ashore.

An article from T.B.S. in 1905 states, "Before establishment of the life-saving station on Cobb's Island, authorized in 1874, the Cobbs rescued at risk of their own lives, many crews from sailing vessels driven ashore there. Often a crew of from ten to twenty would be landed on the island from stranded vessels without a penny, and they would be tenderly cared for. Money cut no figure with these people. The life-saving service for the present day has done no nobler deeds than the Cobbs, assisted by other inhabitants of the island. The Government was never asked for one penny for all the trouble and expense these people went to for ship-wrecked sailors. This work was kept up by the Cobbs until the life-saving service was established."[5]

The Cobbs never charged a fee for saving lives and personal property, but they were known to drive a hard bargain for salvage operations. When the barque *Cricket* was stranded on March 29, 1870, Hugh Jenkins and Company of Baltimore agreed to pay the Cobbs 35 percent of all cargo and apparel "for benefit of all concerned." During the same year an agreement between the Cobbs and Edmond Barret of Philadelphia from the schooner *Harry Lee* stated that the Cobbs, "professional wreckers and partners doing business under the firm and style of Cobb Brothers," were allowed "sixty percentum of the value of all cargo they may save and forty percentum of the value of the said vessel and all her apparel attached, the said percentum being fair and just compensation for the salvage service rendered in saving the said vessel and cargo."

Fish, game, and wildlife were abundant on the island as were oysters, clams, scallops, crabs, and sea turtles. During the winter months the men shot ducks and geese. During the spring and summer months they shot shorebirds. Since game was plentiful and the limit per person restricted only by one's skill with a gun, it seemed only natural the Cobbs should engage in market hunting.

Since they claimed about 150 birds a day, the Cobbs soon built up an active business. At night the families would clean the game. The next morning one of the younger Cobbs would run out the inlet, hail the first northbound ship, and dicker with the captain as to freight rates. Most of the game was shipped to the old New York firm of A. & M. Robbins, and ducks sold for fifty cents each.

The fame of Cobb's Island spread everywhere that the ducks were eaten or sold. When northern sportsmen, eager to hunt on the island, began making requests for rooms, the Cobbs decided to take on a few paying guests. When winter visitors began to request summer accommodations for their families, Nathan decided to

build a hotel. Meanwhile, living quarters were enlarged for the growing number of domestic employees, a rambling clubhouse, a billiard parlor, and several guest cottages were added, and Nathan decided to sell a few lots.

Although the hotel could accommodate one hundred people, this was not enough. The construction of Tammany Hall, the Truitt House, the Maryland House, and the Virginia House followed. A barroom and a ballroom were added in 1868 and a band of musicians was hired to play for dining and dancing.

Although there were other resort hotels on the Eastern Shore during the years that followed the War Between the States, none were so widely patronized as the Cobb's Island Resort. The hotel register shows that between 1874 and 1882 visitors from every Atlantic seaboard state except New Hampshire had stayed at Cobb's Island.

Although Baltimore, Washington, and Richmond supplied about 60 percent of the guests, there were visitors from all parts of the United States as well as from Canada, France, and England. Leading bankers, businessmen, congressmen, and judges were among the guests who frequented the island resort. During the summer months about one-third of the guests were women and children, often accompanied by their maids and nursemaids. On July 14, 1880, Mrs. C. T. Larned of Washington arrived with eight daughters, two sons, and two domestic employees. Mr. Ben Halloway of San Francisco spent two months on the island during the fishing season of 1880 and returned the following year with his wife and son "for more delightful sport." Several Richmonders owned cottages, for they had bought lots for approximately $500. Cobb's Island, originally purchased because of its strategic location for salvage operations, had suddenly become a hunter's paradise and year-round resort accepting summer visitors as well as winter sportsmen.

One guest wrote, "Last week I spent several days most pleasantly on Cobb's Island. It certainly has natural advantages that no other seaside resort I have ever visited has, and I have been to quite a few different states." She continues, "The breezes in the sweltering weather are just glorious; the bathing said by judges to be the finest on this coast; the water scenery is varied and attractive; and it is admitted by all that the fishing and living are unequalled." Some enjoyed the island "for the enchanting hours spent in pleasant company." But to many visitors it was freedom from the conventionalities of society that was most appealing as well as the fact that "the food was good, the terms moderate, the waiters attentive, and Mr. Cobb untiring in his efforts to meet the wants of his guests."

The island resort became so popular that more space was needed for growing fruit and vegetables to feed the guests. In 1868 the Cobbs bought a farm on the mainland. There in addition to fruit and vegetables, they raised beef, pork, lamb, and chickens. On another tract of land near Oyster, they built Cobb's Mill, where meal and grain were prepared for use on the island.

A chapel was built on the south side of the hotel and it was called Cobb's Island Church. In an issue of *The Republican*, St. Louis, Thursday, December 2, 1886, an article submitted by a guest described the chapel as being located near the beach and having a bell and steeple. She wrote, "It is a touching sight to see visitors from different parts of the earth, of various states and denominations, meet together for the first and perhaps the last time to engage in Christian worship." She also mentioned the Sunday School Library, which was especially enjoyed by the children. The article said the beach was as smooth as concrete pavement and a "pleasant carriage ride for some miles around."

The following is an advertisement which appeared in *The Sun*, Baltimore, on June 8, 1868:

SEA-BATHING AT COBB'S ISLAND

The proprietors of the above favorite summer resort, encouraged by the very liberal support heretofore accorded to them, will open the season of 1868 with increased efforts to merit the public favor.

Many improvements have been made since last season in the furniture and arrangements of the buildings, clearing up the grounds, laying out the walks, etc.

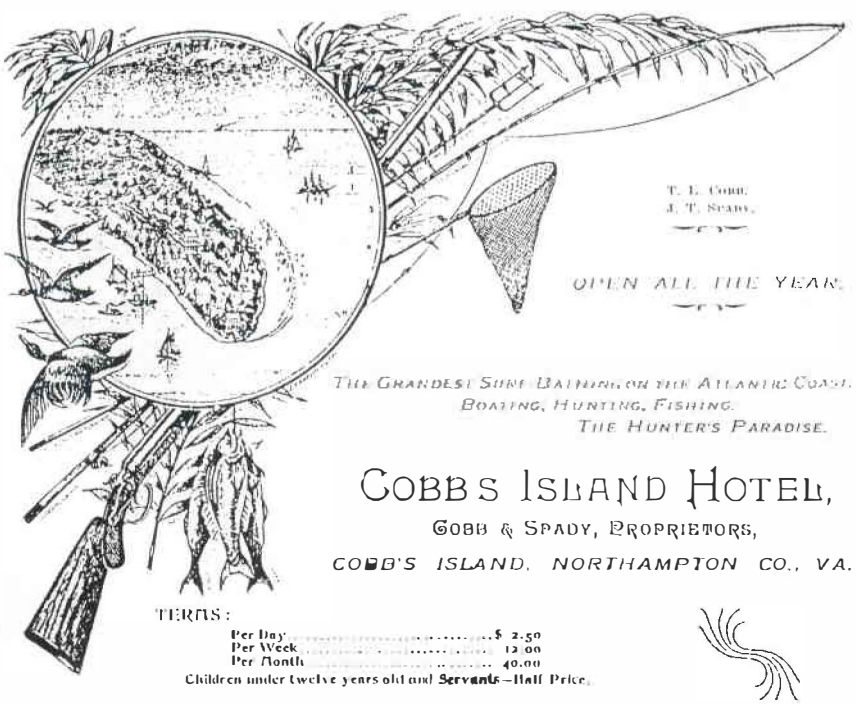
There is a Bowling Alley, a Billiard Room, and a Band of Music has been engaged.

No accident from surf-bathing has ever taken place at this beautiful beach. The shooting and fishing advantages are not equaled on this continent, and an abundance of boats, with experienced men to attend will always be at the command of the guests.

The table arrangements which gave such general satisfaction last season, will be further improved, having engaged the best cook in Virginia, with first class, attentive servants. The steamer Eolus *leaves Norfolk for Cherrystone every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 6:00 AM.. Passengers leaving Baltimore the previous afternoon by the Bay Line can connect with the* Eolus *either at Old Point or Norfolk, arrive at Cherrystone at 10:00 AM, thence by a line that hacks across the Peninsula (four miles) to Nottingham's Landing, and from there by steamer (eight miles) to the Island arriving at 1:00 PM, and by the steamer* Sue *from No. 170 Light Street, Baltimore, direct to Cherrystone, EVERY FRIDAY at 6 o'clock PM.*

Through and round-trip tickets sold on the steamer Sue. *Terms: $3.00 per day, $18.00 per week, $60.00 per month.*

Address: COBB BROTHERS
Cherrystone
Northampton County, Virginia

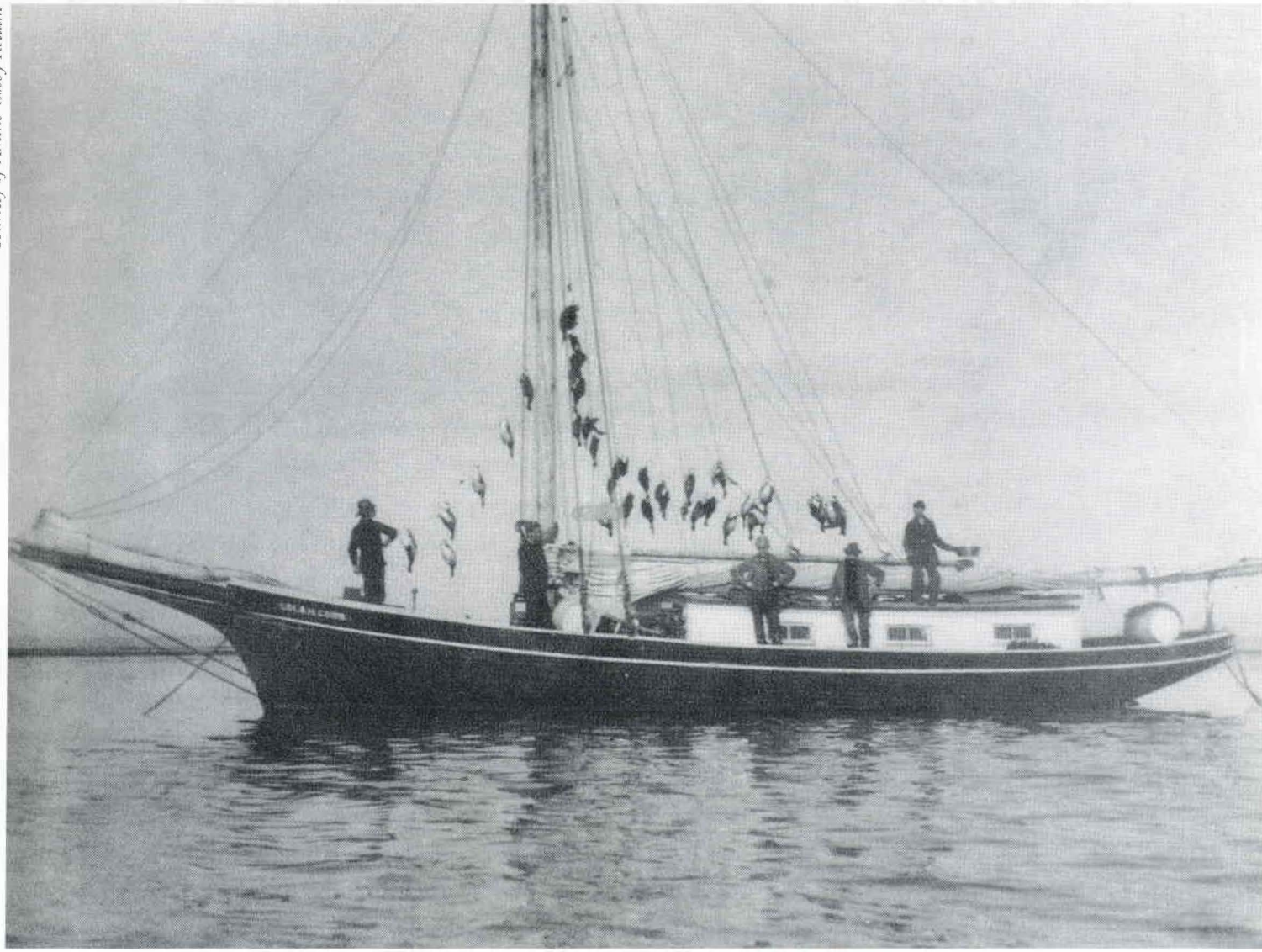

T. L. Cobb.
J. T. Seady.
OPEN ALL THE YEAR.
THE GRANDEST SURF BATHING ON THE ATLANTIC COAST.
BOATING, HUNTING, FISHING.
THE HUNTER'S PARADISE.
COBBS ISLAND HOTEL,
COBB & SPADY, PROPRIETORS,
COBB'S ISLAND, NORTHAMPTON CO., VA.
TERMS:
Per Day ..... $ 2.50
Per Week 12.00
Per Month 40.00
Children under twelve years old and Servants—Half Price.

Transportation to the island was never a great problem. In 1867 the Norfolk-Baltimore steamer *Osceola* brought passengers regularly into Cherrystone Creek. Here guests were met by a Mr. Williams and transported by hack to Nottingham's Landing near Oyster. At the landing they were met by sailing sloop and carried the remaining eight miles to the island. In 1868 a direct run from Baltimore to Cherrystone was initiated by the steamer *Sue*, and six years later in 1884 a special train stop was arranged by the NYP&N Railroad for guests going to the island. This stop was named Cobb's Station. By this time the Cobbs had purchased a steamer which met the guests and transported them to the island in a more modern way. Her name was the *NWA Cobb.*

The *NWA Cobb* was one of the first coal-burning steamers on the seaside. Built in Norfolk, she was purchased by the Cobbs in 1867 and registered as a freight and passenger steamer. She was wooden with a screw propeller, measuring 56.5 feet in length, 4.5 feet in depth and 11.8 feet in width, with 25.85 gross tonnage. Her name, *NWA Cobb*, was for the brothers Nathan, Warren, and Albert.

The sailboat Lola H. Cobb, *owned by T. Lucius Cobb, grandfather of Amine Cosby Kellam.*

Courtesy of Amine Cosby Kellam



In 1890 Nathan died at the age of ninety-two and was laid to rest in the island cemetery. The following year the island began to wash badly. An account of the washing was written by Reverend J. R. Sturgis, one minister of the Cobb's Island Church. The article appeared in the *Peninsula Enterprise* on November 13, 1897, one year after everything was gone. He said that during the last few years the island had become a dangerous place to live. The people who lived in eight of the cottages were the first to leave. Storms had been whipping the beach for six years, Sturgis said. Although the brothers dissolved the partnership and left the island, Nathan Jr. and his wife Sallie stayed there until their very lives were threatened. They were removed by the Coast Guard (Life Saving Service) on a Sunday in October 1896. Everything seemed to have changed with the death of the old patriarch.

It was not until thirty years ago that the decoys carved by Nathan Cobb Jr. attracted wide attention and became collector's items. The Cobbs always carved their initials on their decoys: N. for Nathan, E. for Elkanah, who was Nathan's only son, and A. for Albert. Warren did not carve. However, without turning a decoy over to find the initial, Nathan's decoys can be sighted because of their contented and natural pose. The white juniper or cedar selected for the bodies proved to be resilient to splitting while weathered roots such as those of the holly trees were used for carving the heads. Lead weights were fastened to the bottoms with brass screws rather than lead ones, and the glass eyes used on all Cobb decoys were imported from Germany. The Cobbs gave meticulous attention to detail in their carvings.

In an article on Nathan Cobb Jr., which appeared in *Antiques* magazine in August 1964, William J. Mackey Jr., American authority and collector, wrote, "More than any detail, however, is the skillful way he translated into wood his knowledge and feeling for birds that were so much a part of his life."

Commenting on Nathan Sr. in the same article, Mackey continues, "I've talked for hours about Nathan Cobb with those who knew him, and all agree that he was not a big man physically. Yet somehow I picture him as such, and surely he should be described as a mighty man. After all, I just tried to sight his fowling piece. It weighs over 15 pounds!"

Today Cobb's Island is little more than a salt marsh bordered by a narrow deserted beach almost six miles long, varying in width from a few hundred feet to more than a half-mile. The majesty of the rolling dunes, salt-sprayed grasses, the sound of the surf, the cry of the shorebirds, and the ever-changing pattern of the treacherous inlets remain characteristic of Cobb's Island, barren now, but still beautiful.

The Coast Guard rebuilt its station, the sea gave back some of its land, but the era of the Cobb's Island Resort was gone forever.

The following is a list of ships stranded off the shoals of Cobb's Island which the Cobb Brothers are known to have helped:

Columbia—a schooner going from Charleston, South Carolina, to Baltimore loaded with lumber in 1839. Six men were aboard along with the Captain's wife. Cargo and crew were all saved.

Frank—a schooner

Damontine—a schooner

Tremont—a ship

Blanchard—a ship

Pradle—a schooner

Gassebus—a schooner going from Maine to Jacksonville

Purdy Smith—a schooner from New York

Hetsel—a United States Survey schooner. It exploded; six men were lost.

Luna—a ship from Baltimore

Massachusetts—a brig

International—a ship loaded with ammunition

Ingle—a schooner going from Maine to Alexandria, Virginia

Empire—a schooner from New York. Boiler explosion. Two men froze to death.

George Baratall—a schooner

Alexander Blue—a schooner. Crew saved. Cargo lost.

Grant—a schooner from Philadelphia

Martha Collins—a schooner. Captain was overboard but was rescued.

John A. Bailey—a three-masted schooner

Minerva Wright—a schooner

John T. Grice—a schooner

Trudell—a schooner

Louis Spanier—a schooner from Centerville, Massachusetts

John Gibbons—a brig from Newfoundland

Morning Light—a schooner

Ironsides—a steamer. Crew saved. Total loss.

Antelope—a steamer

Priscilla Anne—a fishing smack

Cricket—a barque from Rio

Harry Lee—a schooner

Thomas Woolsey—a schooner

Paunee—a schooner

George Todd—a schooner

Annie Eliza—a ship

Enoch Pratt—a schooner from New York

Hannibal—a schooner

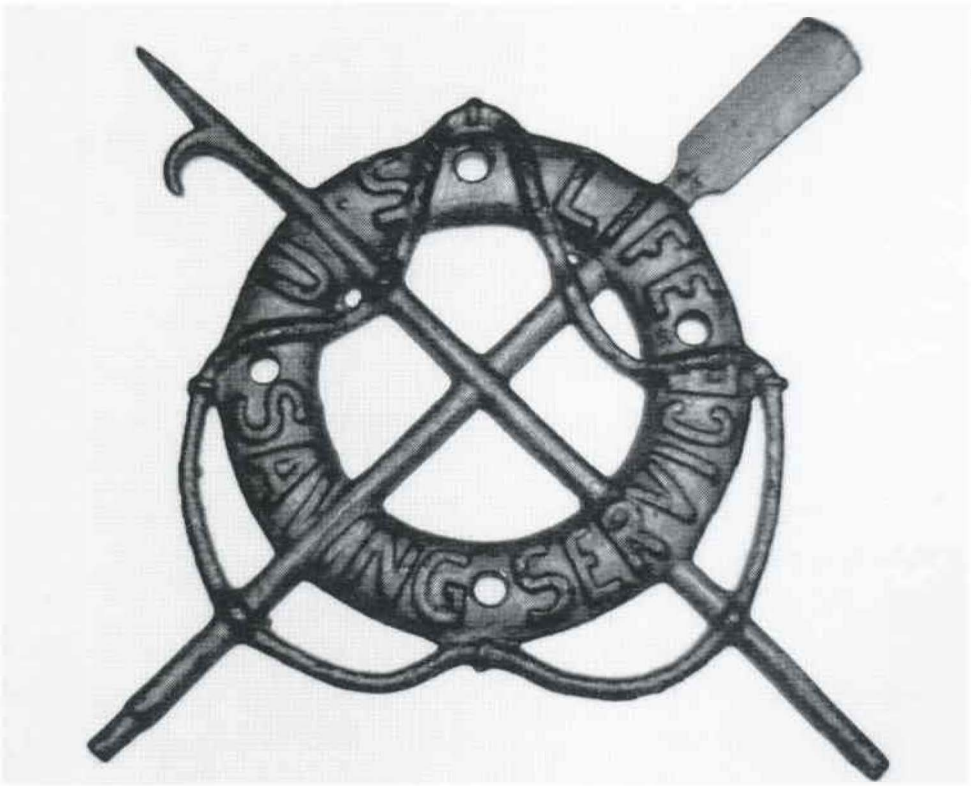
Captain William Morse—a ship

Chapter 2

Lifesaving and the Virginia Barrier Islands

You have to go out, but you don't have to come back.

—United States Life Saving Service motto



Courtesy of Rick Kellam

United States Life Saving Service emblem in bronze from Smith Island, Virginia.

The first approach to lifesaving and property protection in the New World may have arguably occurred on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. As early as 1699, the Eastern Shore County Militia commanders established lookouts and coastal patrols on the barrier islands to assist with navigation and to protect merchants and property owners from sea piracy. Pirates including the infamous Black Beard (alias Edward Teach) are known to have plied the treacherous waters of Virginia's coastline, preying upon the unsuspecting cache of Colonial vessels. As a landscape of numerous remote marsh guts, winding channels, and tidal creeks, the Eastern Shore was well suited for bootlegging operators. From the safety of these secluded places, they could stage surprise attacks and seek refuge from safeguarding patrols. Edward Teach reportedly worked the area between Parramore and Revels Islands that is known today as the Swash. His presence was so well known that early maps of the area refer to Parramore Island as Teaches Isle.

During the 1700s and the 1800s, with the exception of intermittent coastal patrols, much of the work of saving shipwrecked sailors, salvaging ships and their cargo was left to residents of the sparsely populated barrier islands. Beginning in the mid-1800s, there was none better or more prolific than the Cobb family of Cobb's Island.

The history of the United States Life Saving Service on the Virginia's Eastern Shore barrier islands is composed of men who acted solely out of compassion for their fellow mankind. They came from local barrier island communities and the mainland of the Eastern Shore, and were selected because of their master abilities as watermen, sailors, and men of the sea. They knew the local waters, had years of experience upon them, and were as tough as nails. One stationkeeper described his crew as "honest, strong willed and God fearing."

In 1871, thirty-seven-year-old Sumner Increase Kimball was charged with organizing the Life Saving Station and Revenue Cutter Services of the Revenue Marine Bureau of the United States Department of Treasury. His task was to restore honor to these services which had languished badly during and in the aftermath of the American Civil War. Kimball's organizational skills, coupled with the seemingly inexhaustible number of shipwrecks along the Mid-Atlantic coast, led to the appropriation of resources for a series of lifesaving stations on the Virginia Eastern Shore. The new barrier island stations were Assateague Beach, Cedar Island, Hog Island, Cobb's Island, and Smith Island. They were the first five of nine stations eventually constructed on the Virginia barrier islands. The stations were commanded by Fifth District Superintendent Benjamin S. Rich and Assistant Inspector Frank G. F. Wadsworth from their headquarters in Onancock, Virginia. In 1878, by appointment of President Rutherford B. Hayes, Sumner I. Kimball was selected to lead the newly formed United States Life Saving Service as its general superintendent. He committed fifty-nine years of service to the Life Saving Service and its successors. Under his tutelage, the Service recorded an astounding 87.5 percent decrease in shipwreck deaths in regions guarded by the Life Saving Service.[6]

Courtesy of Rick Kellam

The business card of Fifth District Superintendent B. S. Rich of the United States Life Saving Service in Onancock, Virginia.

Proposals for Fuel.

Office Superintendent of Life Saving Stations, Onancock, Virginia, 14 August 1882.

Sealed proposals for furnishing the Life Saving Stations in the Fifth District with quantities of Wood and Coal set opposite the respective stations will be received at this office until 12 o'clock, noon, on Monday the 28th day of August, 1882. The Fifth District is divided into five fuel districts as follows:

***1st District**, Station No. 1—Cape Henlopen, Del., 8 tons coal, 1 cord wood. No. 2 — Rehobeth City, Del., 8 tons coal, 1 cord wood. No. 3—Indian River, Del., 8 tons coal, 1 cord wood.*

***2nd District**, Station No. 4—Ocean City, Md., 8 tons coal, 1 cord wood.*

***3rd District**, Station No. 5—Green Run, Md., 8 tons coal, 1 cord wood. No. 6—Pope's Island, Md., 8 tons coal, 1 cord wood. No. 7—Assateague, Va., 8 tons coal, 1 cord wood.*

***4th District**, Station No. 8—Cedar Island, Va., 8 tons coal, 1 cord wood.*

***5th District**, Station No. 9—Hog Island, Va., 8 tons coal, 1 cord wood. No. 10—Cobb's Island, Va., 8 tons coal, 1 cord wood. No. 11—Smith's Island, Va., 8 tons coal, 1 cord wood.*

Parties may bid to furnish the stations in one or more fuel districts, but the bid for each district should be separate.

The Coal to be furnished under the proposals must be the best quality white ash anthracite, stove size; the Wood to be good, merchantable, seasoned pine, first growth, closely corded and subject to inspection by the Superintendent of the District and the Keepers of the Stations; and delivered in the bins of the stations free of extra expense to the Government, by the 25 of September next year. All proposals must be in sealed envelopes and endorsed as "Proposals for Fuel" and addressed to the undersigned. The right is reserved to reject any or all bids, and to waive defects, if deemed for the interest of the Government.

—Benjamin S. Rich, Superintendent of Life Saving Stations 5th District
Onancock, Virginia
—*Peninsula Enterprise*, 24 August 1882

Each station crew was comprised of a keeper as officer in charge and a crew of seven to eight surfmen. The keeper or station captain was the most experienced of all men and typically remained at the station year-round. To qualify, he had to be of good character, between twenty-one and forty-five years of age, and be sufficiently educated to complete all administrative duties associated with station management. His annual salary was approximately $200.00.

The title of surfman was derived from eastern fishermen who launched their boats into the surf from an open beach. Surfmen were selected by the stationkeeper

and assigned numbers dependent upon their abilities and relative experience. Surfman No. 1 was generally the most senior in command and most proficient in his duties. Surfman No. 8 was of lesser experience. Each surfman wore the number of his position as a rank, on the upper left arm of his dress uniform. In 1873, a surfman's only qualifying requirement was that he be selected by the keeper as the most able-bodied and experienced waterman living nearest to the assigned station. Qualifications were modified over time.

. . . In order to have his application accepted an applicant (a) must be a citizen of the United States; (b) must be not under 18 nor over 45 years of age; (c) must be not less than 5 feet 5 inches in height without clothing; (d) must reside in the district in which he seeks employment; (e) must be able to read and write the English language; (f) must not have passed an examination for surfman within approximately one year next preceding; (g) must be a good swimmer. . .[7]

—U.S. Civil Service Commission
Regulations Governing Admission to the Grade of Surfman
Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, September 1912, et al.

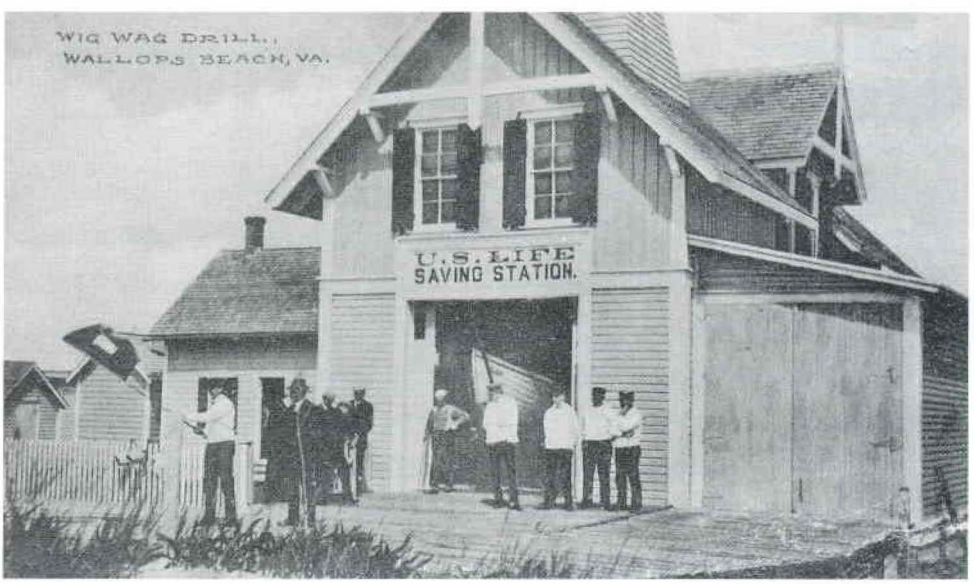
The surfman would risk loss of life or permanent disability, endure absence from his family while at his duty station, bear heavy mental burdens, and work long hours, initially without a future service pension. A little over $1.00 per day or $40.00 per month was typically paid to the surfman during active season. Ultimately, the monthly wage was increased to $65.00 per month during active season. Active season was annually considered as the months when ships were most likely to become distressed. On the Eastern Shore, the active season commenced each year on 1 September and adjourned on 1 May. These men did not have the luxury of modern foul weather gear. Their heavy boots often filled with water and instead of safeguards, became deadly anchors. Their slicker raincoats and pants were simply uninsulated cloth that had been rubbed with oil or wax to repel water and became of little use to keep them dry after repeated exposure to rain and saltwater. Their boats were slow, but steady, enduring and capable of withstanding almost any sea condition. These boats put to sea in the severest of conditions, while all others ran for safe harbor.[8] Powered initially only by strong-backed men pulling oars and later by gasoline motors, every boat trip depended on conserving time and making most efficient use of a station's limited humanitarian resources.

When I see a man clinging to the rigging of a wreck, I see nothing else in the world and I never think of family or friends until I have saved him.

—George Hitchens, Keeper of Smith Island Station, Virginia, 1881–1915

The lifesavers were men of strong character and compassion. Upon hearing the bone-chilling words "Ship in the Offing!" they sprang from their beds and cooks rushed from their galleys to the Boathouse where all rescue equipment was stowed ready for use. Every effort was dedicated to rescuing the shipwrecked sailors, their wives, children, at times their pets, and caring for them afterwards by providing them with dry clothing and food. Surfmen not only knew their individual jobs, but also the job of each fellow crewman. Each surfman knew that if his performance was substandard, it could cost him his life and imperil the rest of the station crew.

Monday: *Drill and practice with the beach apparatus and overhauling and examining the boats and all apparatus and gear. For practice with the beach apparatus there is provided near each station a suitable drill ground, prepared by erecting a spar, called a wreck pole, to represent the mast of a stranded vessel 75 yards distant (over water if possible) from the place where the men operate, which represents the shore. At drill the crew is mustered in the boatroom (of the station), and each man, upon his number being called, salutes the commanding officer and recites in proper sequence every act he is to perform in the exercise prescribed in the Service manual. At the proper words of command they all fall into their allotted places at the dragropes of the apparatus cart and draw it to the drill ground, where they perform the remainder of the exercise, which consists in effecting a mimic rescue by rigging the gear and taking a man ashore from the wreck pole in the breeches-buoy. The officer conducting the drill carefully notes the time which elapses from the moment he gives the initial command "action" until the rescued man sets foot upon the shore. If in one month after the opening of the "active season" a crew cannot accomplish the rescue within five minutes, it is considered that they have been remiss in drilling or that there are some stupid men among them. They are cautioned that if upon the next visit of the inspector a marked improvement is not shown some decisive action will be taken to secure it. This usually produces the desired effect.*



The Wig-Wag flag system was used by surfmen on Wallops Island to communicate with ships during daylight hours.

Courtesy of Rick Kellam

Tuesday: *Practice with the boats. . . . Launching and landing through the surf and at least a half hour's exercise in handling the oars under the keeper's direction.*

Wednesday: *Practice with the International Code of Signals. Drill in signaling is conducted by interrogating each surfman as to the meaning of the various flags, the definitions of two, three, and four flag hoists, the distinguishing flag or pennant of each hoist, the use of the code book, and by actual conversation carried on by means of two sets of miniature signals provided to each station. Frequent practice is also had between the stations and revenue vessels.*

Thursday: *Practice with the beach apparatus (same as Tuesday).*

Friday: *Practice in the method adopted for restoring the apparently drowned. The method adopted for restoring the apparently drowned is formulated into four rules, which each member of the crew commits to memory. In drill he is required to repeat these and afterwards illustrate them by manipulation upon one of his comrades. The medicine chest is also opened, and is examined as to the use of its contents.*

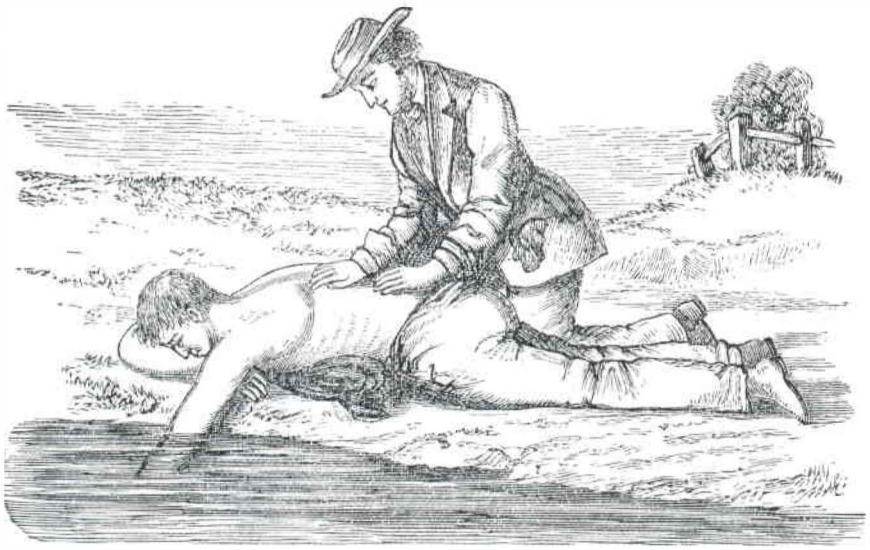


FIG. I.—*Showing the first step taken, by which the chest is emptied of air, and the ejection of any fluids swallowed is assisted.*

Organization & Methods of the United States Life Saving Service, 1896

Saturday: *Cleaning house (station). All station items determined by the Keeper are cleaned, organized and inspected for promotion of duty.*

Sunday: *Lookout and Beach Patrols are mounted. Station crewmen are recessed from drilling only.*[9]

—Sumner I. Kimball.
"A Surfman's Typical Duty Week"
Organization & Methods of the United States Life Saving Service, 1904

Beach patrols were mounted from sunrise to sunset, and during inclement weather at discretion of the stationkeeper. They were the most intimate eyes and ears of each station and were responsible for the expeditious reporting and rendering of aid to vessels in need. The men pulled long shifts and spent countless hours searching the bleak ocean, hoping to never see a ship too close to the bar, or one that had already foundered and was being torn apart by giant seas, strong winds, or violent surf. Huge seas made little time of destroying even the strongest of vessels, sending them to the ocean bottom or scattering them as torn sections of timber upon the barrier island beaches. With few landmarks upon which to bear, the constantly changing landscape of the barrier islands made navigation perilous and often confusing to even the most experienced sea captain. Vessels were frequently warned away from dangerous shoals, bars, landfall, and other obstructions by observant surfmen who would signal danger with handheld Coston flares at night or with signal flags or whistles by day. Ships warned away from danger were seldom identified and remained anonymous successes if the surfman's actions prevented a mishap and allowed the vessel to continue on its journey.

Unlucky sailing crews battled the ocean to free their ship. Their struggles, however, were often in vain. The ocean only squeezed more tightly once you were in her grasp. As their ships floundered in the heavy seas, sailors were forced to climb to the vessel's highest point. Here in the rigging, they would tie themselves to the mast. This desperate act would buy them time, but it also prolonged their agony. After a long winter's night lashed in a ship's rigging with no protection from the cold or mounting waves, a sailor's prospect for life was bleak. With temperatures below freezing and their bodies wet from head to toe, the desperate sailors were frequently found frozen stiff. The expressions on their purple faces told the story that they had gone home to meet their maker and that their suffering was over. If at all possible, and in belief of the smallest glimmer of life, first aid was administered to the found sailors in accordance with the United States Life Saving Service directions for "restoring the apparently drowned."[10]

Those that could not be rescued regularly washed ashore as the unidentified bodies of sailors and crew. Families of the captain and mates habitually accompanied their loved ones aboard. The ocean was as beautiful as it was cruel, and showed no compassion when it came to taking lives. The lifesavers had the grim task of walking the lonely beaches and recovering bodies of women and children. Even the ships dogs and cats were not spared the ocean's wrath. As bodies of shipwreck sailors washed ashore, word spread throughout the tightknit barrier island communities and neighboring islands. Groups of residents would assemble and travel by boat over the area. There they would assist with recovering the remains. The island communities were intensely religious, believing in a personal God and a personal devil.

To be born, reared and live and die on Hog Island
Would seem to ensure free passport to Heaven;
That is if the keeping of all the commands means
Redemption. The native Hog Islander is baptized
Early and is orthodox to a painful degree, he honors
His father and mother as much as a desert Bedouin;
He keeps Sunday with the fidelity of an old Scotch
Covenanter. He does not curse, kill or steal.

—Charles Sterling, Hog Island Lighthouse Keeper, 1903 [11]

The islanders believed in giving each and every person a Christian burial. Upon retrieval, the bodies were taken to one of the highest points on the island and buried after a Biblical verse was read and appropriate words spoken. A generations-old legend suggests that at one time, an Italian steamer traveling off the Parramore Island shoals wrecked one night during a cold wintry northeast gale. Its demise was well beyond view of the Life Saving Service crew. Over the next several days, many bodies washed ashore on the island's beach along with wreckage identifying the ship as a vessel of Italian origin. Word quickly spread and the islanders gathered to perform their relief and religious duties. In collaboration with the Parramore Island Station

Villagers and lifesavers on the barrier islands conducting a funeral for shipwreck victim.

Courtesy of Rick Kellam

Life Saving crew, the bodies were taken to an ancient sand dune that occupied the island's interior. The bodies were interred in the dune, which stood at least thirty feet above sea level. So many sailors, women, and children were buried in the dune that it was named in their honor. Today, through many succeeding eras, the site remains known as Italian Ridge.

Along with the ships and their crew, cargo was washed ashore and salvaged by island residents for use in their homes. Items such as long bars of lye soap, crates of sundries, and furniture from the ships themselves may be still found on the Eastern Shore today. The story of the vessel and bone-chilling accounts of its fate often accompany these items from generation to generation as a sadness of a great ship's loss and that of its brave crew. The men of the Life Saving Service were sincere in their desire to save every mariner, every ship and every cargo, but they were only men—and the sea was more determined.

A rosewood love seat salvaged from a shipwreck on Hog Island, Virginia, by residents of the town of Broadwater.

Detail of ornate carvings on the front legs.

On an October day, he went away;
Away to the sea, where he loved to be,
Even on a vessel for him unworthy.
The boat went down, and so did he,
Into the deep and unforgiving sea.
Inez Doan, Age 14[12]
—Assateague Lighthouse National Monument. Assateague, Virginia

Four of the crew in each station of the Life Saving Service, whose terms had just expired, were placed again on duty on Thursday night for the summer months. Whether they are expected to fight with their life-saving apparatus any Spanish fleet which may happen this way or to keep an eye on the Spanish spies, which are said to infest our coast, we are not advised.

—*Peninsula Enterprise*, 11 June 1898

I have made my examination of Oyster Harbor, Virginia, August 7 and have the honor to submit the following report of same: Two and one-half miles east from Cheriton, the first station on the New York, Philadelphia and Norfolk railroad, northerly from Cape Charles City, Virginia is the new post-office and town of Oyster. It is at the edge of the salt marsh which, with the numerous inlets and bays, forms a separation eight miles wide of the fast land from the Atlantic Ocean. About two-thirds of a mile east from the town is a channel fifteen to eighteen feet deep and 300 to 400 feet wide, extending in a north south direction, known as the Thoroughfare. One mile north from this point the south and north branches of the Thoroughfare unite and form a wide and deep channel, flowing eastward and emptying into the Atlantic ocean between Cobb Island and Wreck Island. This is known as Sand Shoal channel. The south branch of the Thoroughfare and the shallow bays adjoining it in the vicinity of the town of Oyster have lately become locally known as Oyster harbor. It makes a splendid harbor for boats engaged in the oyster, clam and fish industry, and is used by several hundred boats of this kind during the oyster season. They lie in this harbor over Sundays because it is one of the nearest and most convenient approaches to fast land where they can obtain water and provisions.

There is but one store (owned by Mr. W. F. Travis)[13] *in the town of Oyster and twenty to twenty-five houses. This store is said to be kept busy all night Saturdays and all of Sundays during the oyster season, supplying oystermen. From the Thoroughfare to the store the approach can be made through a shallow inlet with a skiff except at low tide, when this runs dry at the upper end.*

—*Peninsula Enterprise*, 16 January 1904

Courtesy of Rick Kellam

United States Coast Guard Crossed Anchors and Life Ring worn as a hat device.

Courtesy of Rick Kellam

In 1915, the Life Saving Service included an all-time high of 279 stations nationwide on all coasts including Alaska and the Great Lakes. Nine of the stations were located on the Virginia barrier islands.

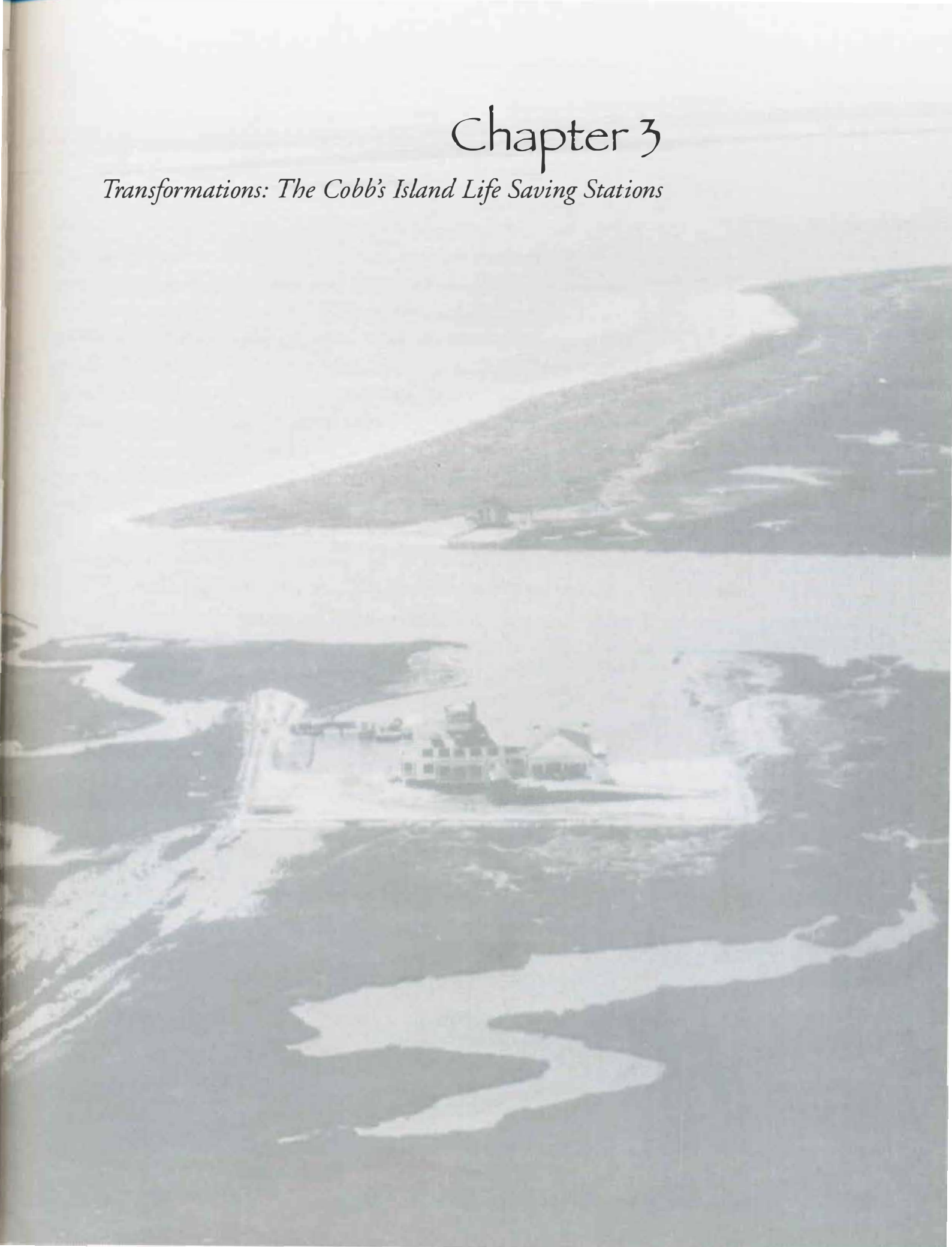
Maritime safety in the United States took a giant step forward on January 28, 1915, when two historic agencies, the Revenue Cutter Service and the Lifesaving Service, were merged into a single organization known as the United States Coast Guard. Both organizations had long and proud traditions of humanitarian service reaching far back to early days of the Republic. The Revenue Cutter Service, direct ancestor of the Coast Guard, had been in existence for more than a century and had already achieved a distinguished record both as a fighting force and as a highly versatile law enforcement and maritime safety agency. Similarly, the Lifesaving Service had won itself an honored place in the affections of the American public for its effective and heroic actions on behalf of distressed vessels and persons at sea.

—U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters press release, Washington, D.C.
28 January 1915[14]

Today the United States Coast Guard Station Chincoteague and Station Group Eastern Shore remain as the only stations responsible for the barrier islands. Their very presence continues to be honored and revered by the maritime community. Be it the United States Life Saving Service, Revenue Cutter Service, or Coast Guard, mariners of the barrier islands have always known that the coastal guardians are ever vigilant and willing to risk their own lives in pursuit of saving others. Although times have changed, the mission of saving human life and protecting property from the perils of the sea remains the same—a mission of personal sacrifice.

Chapter 3

Transformations: The Cobb's Island Life Saving Stations



Section 1

1875–1934: Forefathers

In 1875, architect J. Lake Parkinson was assigned as assistant superintendent for construction of the United States Life Saving Service. Parkinson's responsibilities included supervising the modernization of existing facilities and the siting and design of all new facilities built by the Life Saving Service. He relied heavily on local information regarding tides, hazardous conditions, prevailing currents, storms and the shifting location of inlets and islands. Parkinson established that the Life Saving Service represented the federal government's participation in local communities. Lifeboat stations symbolized the maritime presence of security and governance in the same manner as a courthouse or other civic building, and their architecture reflected a civic permanence in construction methods and aesthetics. Parkinson developed an era-specific regional architecture that was based in part on using standardized drawings and nationally standardized construction methods that were modified in response to locally available construction materials, methods, and trades.

This photograph shows some of the Cobb's Island Station crew in the early 1900s. Stationkeeper John R. Andrews is second from the right on the lower row. To his left is surfman Bill Bloxom.

Courtesy of Rick Kellam

What is today known as the "1876-Type"[15] station pattern is thought to be Parkinson's first significant architectural proposal within the Life Saving Service. The proposal modified a series of previous station designs by Parkinson's predecessor at the Life Saving Service, architect Francis W. Chandler.[16]

The first government-issue lifesaving station was constructed on Cobb's Island in 1876.[17] The station was built upon land purchased by the U.S. government from the Cobb family on 3 March 1875.[18] It was located seven and seven-eighths miles southwest of the Hog Island Light and designated as Station Number Seven of the Fifth Life-Saving District. The first stationkeeper was James T. Melson. The station's crew of six surfmen included Arthur Cobb, grandson of Nathan Cobb Sr. Cobb's Island was also known as one of the Service's "checkerboard" stations because it enlisted an integrated crew.[19] Surfman Number Three was African-American Warner Collins, who served at the station until 15 May 1881 when he died from disease acquired while in the line of duty.[20]

Stations Damaged in Storm

In April 1878, a significant storm battered the Eastern Shore. Many of the Fifth District Stations were heavily damaged. The storm carried the Cobb's Island Station seventeen feet from its foundation.[21]

The station buildings upon the coast are all constructed with a view to withstand the severest tempests. Those located—as many necessarily are—where they are liable to be undermined or swept from their positions by the ravages of storms and tidal waves are so strongly put together that they may be overthrown and sustain but trifling injury. There are instances on record where they have been carried a long distance inland—in one case a half a mile—without sustaining material damage. This substantial construction also enables them to be easily and cheaply moved when threatened by the gradual encroachment of the sea, which upon many sections of the coast, effects in the course of years great changes in the configuration of the coast line.[22]

—Sumner I. Kimball
General Superintendent of The United States Life Saving Service
Organization & Methods of the United States Life Saving Service, 1904

Cobb's Island Station Is One of the Expanded 1876-Type Stations

On 27 August 1879, the Cobb's Island Station was destroyed by fire. A second Life Saving Station was dedicated on Cobb's Island in 1880. Under Stationkeeper Charles Crumb, Surfmen Thomas R. Dunton, Obed G. Goffigan, Warner Collins, James K. Badger, John G. Carpenter, and George Isdell are cited on the duty roster of 1 September 1880.[23] The station's navigational position was established as 37°17' 20"N 75°46' 15"W.[24] The replacement station was an architecturally

expanded and updated version of the original Carpenter Gothic 1876-Type Station. A cupola and hipped dormer windows in the roofline were added. The station was one of approximately twenty-six 1876-Type pattern facilities built between 1875 and 1881 along the Atlantic Coast.[25] These included:

1875	Hog Island, Virginia
1878	Rehobeth Beach, Delaware
1878	Cranberry Hills, Maine
1878	Ocean City, Maryland
1878	Poyner Hill, North Carolina
1878	Gull Shoal (Cedar Hummock), North Carolina
1878	Kill Devil Hills, North Carolina
1878	Paul Gamiels Hill, North Carolina
1878	Penny's Hill (Currituck Inlet), North Carolina
1878	Wash Woods (Deal's Island), North Carolina
1878	Southampton, New York
1878	Popes Island, Virginia
1879	Fourth Cliff, Massachusetts
1879	Watch Hill, Rhode Island
1878–79	Short Beach, New York
1878–79	Seatack (Virginia Beach), Virginia
1878–79	Bodie Island, North Carolina
1878–79	Big Kennakeet, North Carolina
1878–79	Creeds Hill, North Carolina
1878–79	Durrants (Hatteras), North Carolina
1878–79	Pea Island, North Carolina
1878–79	Little Island, Virginia
1880	Seabright, New Jersey
1880–81	Amagansett, New York

Cobb's Island Gets Boathouse

In 1897, a separate Boathouse was constructed. It was a simple ridged-roof rectangular building with sides clad in cedar shingles. A single bay door at each of its gable ends provided access for rescue boats.

Mr. G. Welly Coard has been awarded the contract to build the boathouse for the Government at Cobb's Island. He was one of the many bidders from Delaware to Cape Charles, but came out ahead in fine shape. When he makes up his mind to bid for a piece of first-class work he generally "gets there."

—*Peninsula Enterprise*, 27 March 1897

Steamer Warned

4 December 1890, Cobb Island, Virginia: At 10 o'clock the patrol saw a steamer standing in toward the shoals. He gave warning with his signal, when she immediately changed her course and proceeded offshore.[26]

—*Organization & Methods of the United States Life Saving Service*, 1890

Fifth District Stations in Virginia

By early 1890 most of the significant stations on the Virginia barrier islands had been established. Under District Superintendent Benjamin S. Rich, the Fifth District included seventeen stations extending from Cape Henlopen, Delaware, to Cape Charles, Virginia. From north to south the Virginia stations included:[27]

Pope's Island—ten miles northeast of Assateague Light

Assateague Beach—one and one-half miles south of Assateague Light

Wallops Beach—one and one-half miles south of Chincoteague Light

Metompkin Inlet—on Metompkin Beach, near the Inlet

Wachapreague/Cedar Island—south end of Cedar Island

Parramore's Beach—midway on Parramore Island

Hog Island—south end of Hog Island

Cobb's Island—south end of Cobb's Island

Smith's Island—at the Cape Charles Light

On 30 June 1900 the Life Saving Service Stations of the Fifth District on the Eastern Shore of Virginia were reorganized to become the Sixth District of the Life Saving Service.

Gallant Rescue

One of the most gallant acts of life saving that I have ever seen happened here today. John Matthes, aged 7 years and Joe Crumb, aged 10 years were sculling about in the channel in separate boats when Joe Crumb accidentally fell overboard. John was some distance from Joe but instead of crying for help he as coolly and deliberately as any member of the Life Saving Service, sculled as rapidly as he could to Joe's assistance, reaching him just in time to save him. He was not strong enough, however, to pull Joe in but told him to hold fast to the boat and with him clinging to it he sculled to the shore. Joe's rescue from a watery grave was certainly due to his courage, skill and judgment. This was witnessed by several members of the Life Saving crew and they said that no man could have done more than John did. In 4 years experience as a surfman I have never seen a deed more worthy of a medal than this one.

—Surfman, Cobb's Island, 24 April 1892

Letter to the editor, *Peninsula Enterprise*, 30 April 1892

Courtesy of United States Coast Guard Archives

This photograph shows the Main Building and Boathouse of the 1880-era Cobb's Island Station. The external structural bracing, featuring a central kingpost and drop pendant, are visible at the end of the dormitory gable. The launchway was bordered with a concrete bulkhead. The bow of a rescue boat can be seen inside the open doorway of the Boathouse.

Courtesy of Rick Kellam

In September 1914 a new deck and bulkhead were being constructed at the 1880-era Cobb's Island Station. In this photograph the bow of a rescue boat can be seen through the open door of the Boatroom.

Patrolman Flashes Warning

18 December 1895. Cobb's Island, Virginia: At 6:50 PM a patrolman seeing a vessel standing into danger flashed a Coston light to apprise her of it. This was effective, and her course was at once changed, carrying her offshore in safety.[28]

—*Organization & Methods of the United States Life Saving Service*, 1896

Sloop Runs Aground after Captain Knocked Out

On 6 May 1896 the Cobb Island Life Saving crew engaged in a rescue of unusual origin and outcome. With her master, Captain Showell, at the helm, the sloop Malcolm *was en route northward from Hampton, Virginia, to Atlantic City, New Jersey. Through unexplicable circumstances, Captain Showell was struck by the ship's boom and knocked unconscious. With the captain in a cataleptic state, the vessel then drifted without control and ran aground approximately four miles south-southeast of the station on Wreck Island. The station crew launched their surfboat and upon reaching the* Malcolm, *brought her under control by casting her anchors and securing the vessel in place. The* Malcolm*'s two shaken crew members then requested that they be taken to Cobb Island Station. The crew recovered quickly and departed the station on the following day. Captain Showell, however, remained in recovery at the station for two additional days before returning to his home in Chincoteague, Virginia. While recuperating at the station, he sold his stranded vessel to a local wrecking company (thought to be the Cobb family's enterprise) for the sum of three-hundred dollars. Subsequently on 18 May, with assistance of the station crew, the new owners freed the* Malcolm *completely, salvaging the seven-ton vessel and the entirety of its contents.*[29]

—*Organization & Methods of the United States Life Saving Service*, 1896

Storms Damage Islands

Throughout 1895–96, a series of severe storms battered the Eastern Shore of Virginia. A rare October hurricane was recounted as "a great tidal wave and storm that . . . swept over [Cobb's] island and destroyed every vestige of the inhabitable part."[30] Records of the damage varied, but the storm was particularly devastating to the seaside barrier islands.

Chincoteague: C. E. Babbitt, Jr. of this place has been awarded the contract to move Cobb's Island Life Saving Station. The beach was so badly washed by recent N.E. winds that the station had to be moved from its present site.

—*Peninsula Enterprise*, 19 September 1896

Cape Charles, Virginia, October 13: A special messenger from Cobb's Island this afternoon brought the information that Cobb's Island was entirely submerged yesterday at high tide. The hotel was entirely demolished and partly washed to sea. All buildings

save three were demolished or washed away. The only buildings remaining are the life-saving station, a cottage belonging to Mr. Ashby Jones of Richmond, Virginia, and a cottage belonging to Thomas Smith. The latter was built by Reverend Thomas Dixon Jr. of New York about three years ago. The beach was washed so that an ordinary tide washes over the island.

—*Northampton Ledger*, 14 October 1896

The high tide of Sunday night overflowed Cobb's Island and wrecked every building there except the Life Saving Station and dwelling of Thomas B. Smith and Ashby Jones.

—*Peninsula Enterprise*, 17 October 1896

After quite an adventurous trip The Sun*'s correspondent succeeded in reaching Cobb Island yesterday by means of a small sailboat, in company with several other visitors, to ascertain as near as possible the actual damage received by the island in the recent hurricane which prevailed along the entire Atlantic coast with such a destruction to life and property. Our boat was the first to carry a party to the island since the storm, and as yet, the seas in the vicinity of Cobb's Island are running so very high that it is really perilous for a boat of small dimensions to attempt the trip. The reports of the damage done to Cobb's Island have been so conflicting, coming as they did from unauthentic sources.* The Sun*'s correspondent thought a trip to the island would be necessary to render entirely authentic reports. Owing to the blowing down of the telephone lines connecting with the island and the inability of the islanders to leave their homes, correct reports have not previous to this been rendered.*

The man in the center of this photograph posing with the Cobb's Island Station crew is believed to be Reverend Thomas Dixon.

Courtesy of Rick Kellam

We found about twenty persons on the island, including the members of the Life-Saving Station, all of whom were in a very sorrowful mood on account of the almost entire destruction of the island and the property thereon. One of the most prominent citizens of the island took his loss in the most philosophical manner. He believes that this, as well as the previous storms encountered on the island during the past few years, are only Divine warning for them to vacate the island entirely, and he thought it would not be long before Cobb's Island would be many feet under the surface of the broad Atlantic ocean. While only a few of the houses were washed entirely away, all of them suffered more or less damage. The water was fully a foot deep over the entire island, and the seas which rolled were 40 to 50 feet in height.

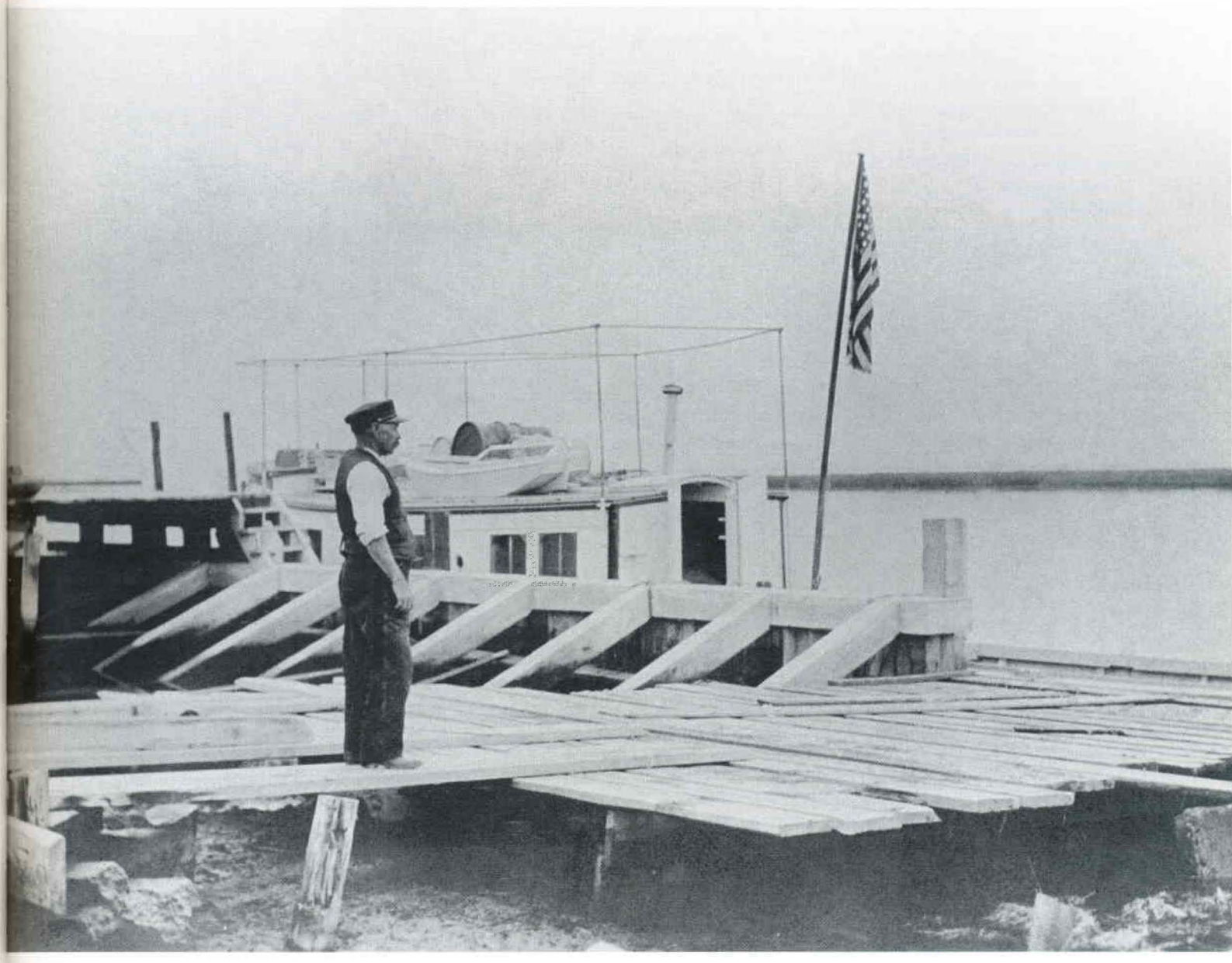
This photograph shows some of the Cobb's Island Station crew during the early 1900s. Stationkeeper John R. Andrews is seated in the front right of the photograph. To his left is surfman Bill Bloxom.

Courtesy of Rick Kellam

Courtesy of Rick Kellam

The Baltimore Cottage, a very prominent building on the island and which was occupied generally by Marylanders, and which was previous to the storm seventy-five yards from the beach, is now a total wreck, being pounded to pieces by the immense seas which swept the island. Several other cottages were about half buried in the sand. In one of these your correspondent found tacked to the wall a well preserved copy of The Sun *dated June 12, 1895. The room was almost full of sand; barely room enough to admit one person. The hotel complex is a complete wreck; the floors, porches, wall and windows are all broken up. About three feet of sand stands in the dancing pavilion on the first floor. The bar room, billiard room, bowling alley and several other small buildings were tumbled down in one heap and broken up so they were of no use whatever. There are several wells of fresh water now covered by the ocean that were previously to the storm in the barn-yard of Mr. Cobb, used for watering his stock. The island was reduced to fifty acres, leaving only about twenty-five in sight at low water.*

The man in this September 1914 photograph is believed to be Station-keeper John R. Andrews. He was reviewing the progress of construction for a new station deck and bulkhead.

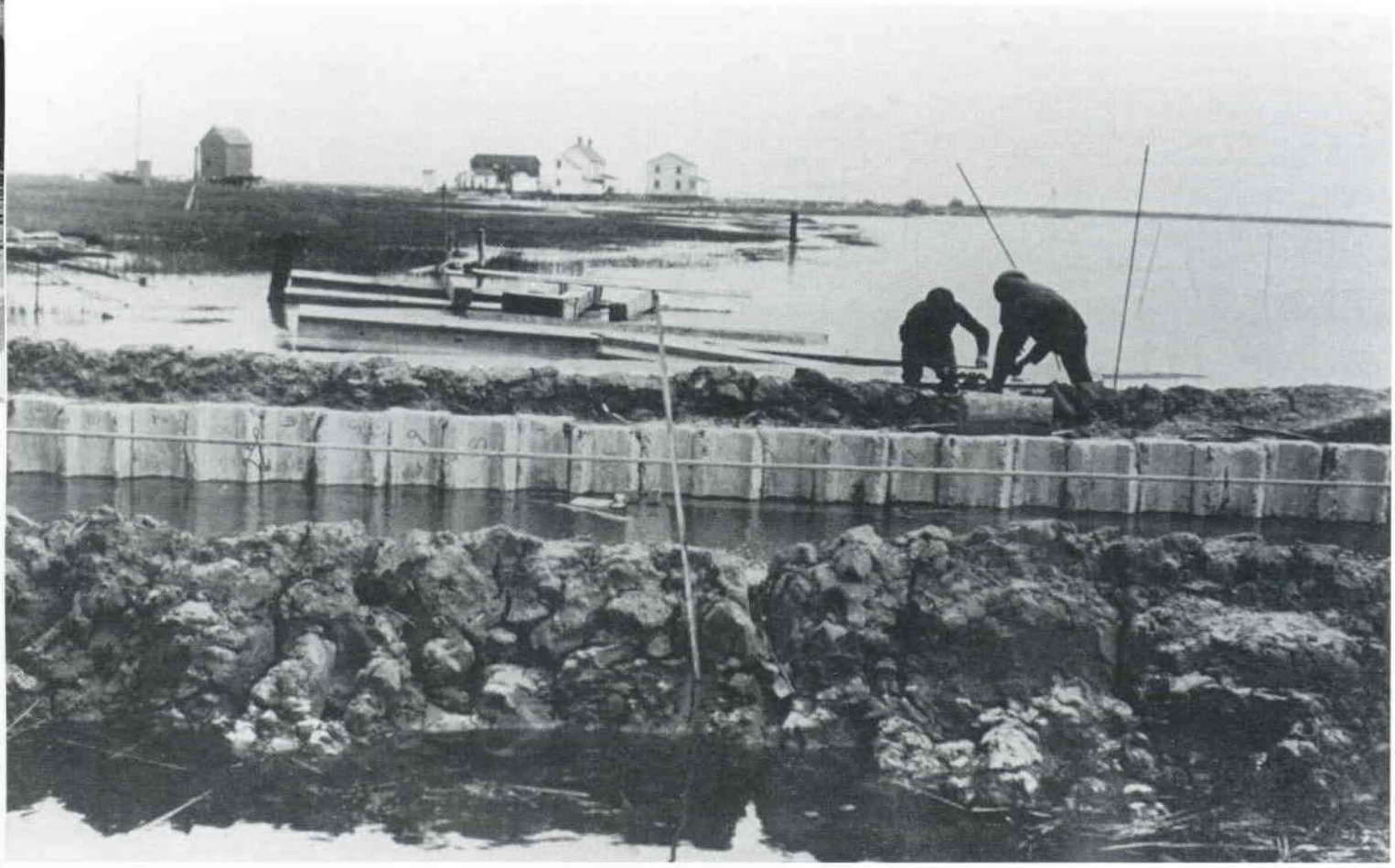


The government officials about four weeks ago moved the lifesaving station two hundred and fifty yards further inland, which undoubtedly saved the building, as the water stood six feet deep at the former site of the building. The Methodist church and the cottages belonging to Mr. Thomas Smith (recently purchased of the Rev. Thomas Dixon of this city), and Mr. Ashby Jones of Richmond, Va., were not seriously damaged on account of their elevation from the ground. The loss is estimated at many thousands of dollars and probably the extinction of Cobb's Island as a summer resort. Quite a number of boats of considerable size are now in the middle of the island, on dry land.

Cobb's Island is situated about nine miles from the mainland, out in the Atlantic Ocean. It has been inhabited for about fifty years and is unexcelled in its game products, being visited annually in the winter and spring by the sporting men of the Northern and Southern cities. It has also been quite a prominent summer resort. It had for a long time been owned by the Cobbs of Northampton County. About five years ago a Lynchburg syndicate purchased about twenty-five acres, including the hotel and a number of cottages for the sum of $20,000, and but for this the recent damage would have resulted very disastrously to its former owners, Messrs. Nathan and Warren Cobb. Already several families have moved from the island and others declare their intention of doing likewise.

—*Baltimore Sun*, 20 October 1896

When the stations were constructed, much of the effort involved dredging access channels and building boat basins for the rescue boats. In this Cobb's Island photograph, two men were preparing one of the bulkheads to retain the channel edges. The two white buildings on the horizon were clubhouses that were credited to the Cobb family.



Courtesy of Rick Kellam

Station Moved Again

For the second time in two years the station is moved due to the shifting island landscape and threat of flooding.

Chincoteague: C. E. Babbitt, Jr., has been awarded the contract to remove Cobb's Island Life Saving Station 260 yards north of its present site.

—*Peninsula Enterprise*, 16 April 1898

Capt. B. S. Rich of the Life Saving Service was in our city on Sunday past. Capt. Rich has been on the Islands looking after the service and reports everything in very good shape with the exception of Cobb's Island, which is fast going away, and which will soon have to be replaced by a vessel, as the beach has become too insecure to trust a building on much longer.

—*Peninsula Enterprise*, 14 May 1898

Patrolman Warns Vessel

29 October 1898, Cobb Island, Virginia: At 1:00 AM, the patrolman discovered a vessel standing into danger and fired his red light [flare gun], upon which she altered her course and stood off into deep water.[31]

—*Organization & Methods of the United States Life Saving Service*, 1899

Rails for the boat carriage extended far into the water from the Boathouse. The large pointed logs stacked on the left were foundation piles waiting to be installed. Loon Channel is in the background.

Courtesy of United States Coast Guard Archives

Letters of Gratitude

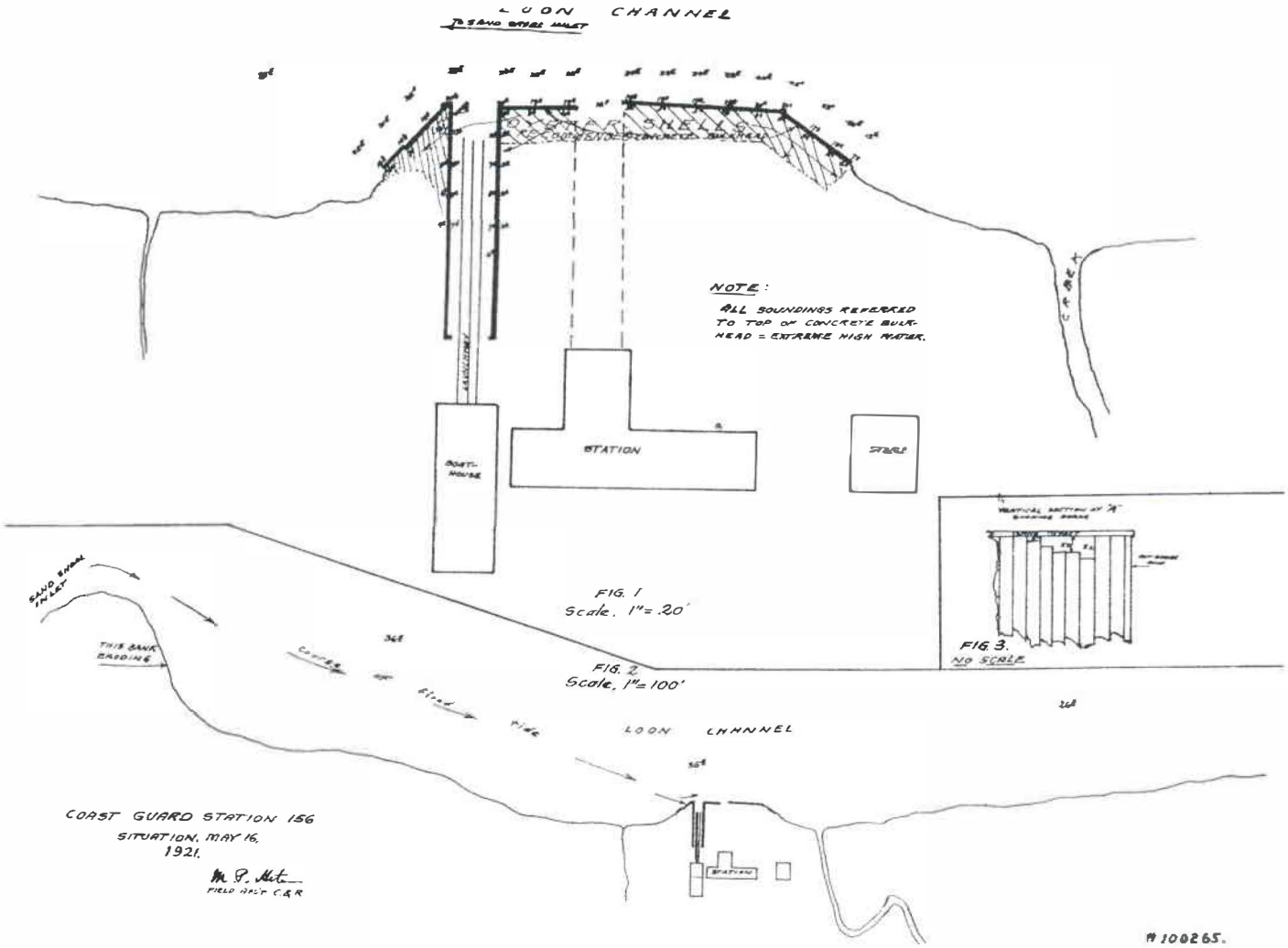
Dear Sir:

The schooner George E. Dudley *stranded on Carter's Bar, about 6 miles from Cobb Island Life Saving Station, at 5 o'clock on the morning of February 8, 1899. Regardless of heavy surf, Captain J. R. Andrews and his crew were alongside in their lifeboat very shortly after daylight, ready to take us off the vessel or to render any other assistance that might be needed.*

We remained aboard all day, trying to work the vessel off, and toward night Captain Andrews returned and took us to the station, where our tired crew got a good night's rest, and were treated with the greatest kindness by every member of the station crew. I cannot sufficiently express my gratitude to Captain Andrews and each and every one of his crew for their kindness and their manly conduct in assisting us in every way in their power throughout the whole time we remained in their vicinity.[32]

—Thomas J. Wilson, Master of Schooner *George E. Dudley*, Norfolk, Virginia
Letter to Sumner I. Kimball, General Superintendent of the
U.S. Life Saving Service, Washington, D.C., 1 March 1899

This drawing was a site survey performed on 16 May 1921. It was used to determine predominant water currents affecting the station and the extent of concrete bulkheads necessary for stabilization. Notice the stables to the north of the station.



Courtesy of United States Coast Guard Archives

Dear Sir:

I desire to express to you and the Department our high appreciation of the daring and skillful service rendered us by the crew of the Cobb Island Life-Saving Station in the late terrible blizzard. Our yacht, the Dixie, *was frozen in the bay on February 9, short of wood and provisions. On the first day of the freeze I managed to make my way over the ice to the station, and thence to the mainland with the help of one of the crew. I informed the captain, John R. Andrews, of the condition of Mrs. Dixon and her guests and the crew in the yacht, and asked him if the ice lasted longer than Friday, the 17th instant, to attempt to take them off, as their provisions would only last till then. On the 17th she was still frozen in but had no signals of distress set. In accordance with my request and the information I had given him, the captain ordered the crew to drag the surfboat five miles over the ice to the* Dixie *and take off the party. They broke through the ice again and again but sprang into the boat and to the oars until they could pull her up on the ice again. They succeeded after terrific exertions in reaching the yacht and they took off our people and dragged the boat back to the station, another five miles, in the same way.*

It was the most difficult feat I have ever known accomplished in the Service. Such men are an honor to the nation whose uniform they wear and to the larger cause of humanity in which they so nobly serve.[33]

—Thomas Dixon Jr., Pastor, The People's Church, New York, New York
Letter to Sumner I. Kimball, General Superintendent of the
U.S. Life Saving Service, Washington, D.C., 12 March 1899

Lumber-Laden Schooner Wrecked

Cape Charles, Virginia. 8 February. The three-masted schooner Jennie S. Huddell, *Captain Thomas A. Kelley, loaded with lumber from Norfolk bound for New York, was wrecked while off Cobb's Island Sunday morning. The captain and crew arrived here this afternoon stranded, endeavoring to reach New York.*

According to the story told by the captain, about 1 o'clock Sunday morning the schooner had sprung a leak in her hold. The crew manned the pumps and worked continually for forty-eight hours. They reached within three miles of shore when they were blown thirty-five miles to sea in a strong gale. Their distress signals were sighted by the life saving crew at Cobb Island and they were rescued when almost exhausted.

The schooner had on board 250,000 feet of lumber consigned to Darker and Company, New York. The crew consisted of the two mates, Leon Wilson and Joseph Dork, and two Norwegians, names unknown. The schooner is a total wreck. Part of the cargo can be saved. The vessel is owned by Endicott and Hammond, New York.

—*Eastern Shore News*, 10 February 1910

The Wreck of the *Laura Tompkins*

The following excerpt is from "The Wreck of the *Laura Tompkins*, 1913" in *Shipwrecks and Rescues along the Barrier Islands of Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia* by George and Suzanne Hurley, 1984. The Schooner *Laura Tompkins* grossed sixteen tons and hailed from Chincoteague, Virginia, with a crew of two.

On the morning of March 2, 1913, the two-masted schooner Laura Tompkins *left Chincoteague, Virginia, bound for the sounds of North Carolina to pick up a cargo of seed oysters. She was an aged vessel, sixty four years old. Her crew consisted of two men, Captain D. M. Merritt, who owned the vessel, and a helper, Samuel Holden. After crossing the bar at Chincoteague, Merritt laid a course which was intended to take her about three miles outside of the Cobb's Island Inlet sea buoy. The weather during the day was clear, with a moderate northwest wind that gradually increased to a fresh breeze shifting to the west in the afternoon. The course taken by the schooner was the shortest and fastest that could be taken. It was, however, not the safest.*

As the wind increased during the afternoon, and the Laura Tompkins *gradually drew away from the shelter of the land, she began to feel the force of the heavy sea. Suddenly, she was taking on water. Merritt and Holden immediately manned the pumps. Apparently the pounding of the seas on her empty hull loosened the ends of some of her bottom planks and let in a flow of water that could not be stopped. The schooner settled almost without warning; so quickly, in fact, that Merritt and Holden had to swim to reach the crosstrees of the mainmast. They watched in terror as waves broke across the vessel.*

The sun set quickly and the cold of the oncoming night set in. The temperature stood at forty degrees, but the strong wind blowing against their wet clothing soon caused the men to suffer severely in the cold. Merritt, fortunately, had on his oilskins, but Holden had been working through the day in a light shirt and was without any coat or protective clothing. They knew that if they could last through the night that they would be discovered in the morning by the Cobb's Island life-saving crew.

Fortunately, the water in which they sank was shallow, and as the vessel rested on the bottom her mast stood several feet above the surface. The two men climbed up into the spreads of the main rigging and lashed themselves to the masthead to keep from being swept away by the seas which drenched them each time the schooner rolled. Within three hours Samuel Holden was near death and by midnight he was dead. Merritt, fearing that the weight of Holden's body on the mainmast might be the cause of himself being carried away, cut the body down and tied it lower down on the main throat halyard. Sometime during the night Holden's body was torn loose and washed away. Merritt remained in the rigging throughout the night, all of the next day and night, and until

midmorning of the second day, March 4. His thoughts throughout this time were centered mainly on his failure to carry distress flags aboard the Laura Tompkins *and the fact that, because of this, he might not be discovered by the lifesavers.*

The schooner was observed on the afternoon of March 2 by the day watch who stood in the lookout tower atop the station house on Cobb's Island. She was seen to tack to the northwest about sunset and shift her mainsail for a reefed foresail, and later to haul down her jib. Since numerous small craft plied the waters off Cobb's Island, and it was not unusual for them to alter their course, take in or make out sail, or even come to anchor for the night under the shelter of the island, there was no reason to suspect that the vessel was in trouble. She was not flying signals of distress. As darkness came she was observed still tacking northward under foresail only.

On the morning of March 3, the station watch discovered a strange-looking object ten miles to the northeast of the station. No one could identify it, but the general opinion of the lifesaving crew was that it was either a stray buoy or a portion of a naval target. The object furnished a topic of conversation for the crew throughout the day, but no one associated it with a vessel in distress. The curiosity aroused by it caused Keeper John R. Andrews to declare that he and the crew would go out the following morning during their weekly surfboat drill and investigate.

Early the next day, on March 4, the lifesaving crew launched the surfboat through a relatively calm surf and pulled with vigor toward the object, which lay about ten miles to the northwest. When they were within two miles of the wreck, the faces of the keeper and the surfmen suddenly took on a look of disbelief and then of determination, and as they pulled at the oars with renewed strength toward what they could now make out to be the hopeless wreck of a two-masted schooner.

They were aghast at the thought that they had not investigated sooner and that lives might have been lost due to this error in judgment. As they neared the schooner, they saw Merritt in the rigging. They wasted no time in bringing the surfboat alongside. Miraculously, Merritt was able to get into the surfboat without assistance, stand up all the way to shore and walk unassisted from the point of landing to the station. Profound apologies were extended to Merritt for the length of time he had had to stay aboard the wreck, and Merritt in turn blamed himself for not having distress flags aboard with which to let the lifesaving crew know that he was in trouble.[34]

There was much controversy in the aftermath of the loss of the *Laura Tompkins* and perishing of Samuel Holden. Keeper Andrews was sternly reprimanded for his indiscretions in not directing the station crew properly. With an otherwise flawless record, he remained stationkeeper unil 1915, when the Cobb's Island Station was renumbered as Station 156 of the Sixth Coast Guard District.[35]

Courtesy of United States Coast Guard Archives

This photograph shows the 1880-era Cobb's Island Station as seen from Loon Channel on 9 January 1930. Boat launchways extended from the Boatroom of the Main Building and the Boathouse. The station's cupola extended above the roof peak. Pipes that transferred water from the station's roof to collection cisterns were adjacent to the Boathouse and Main Building.

Courtesy of United States Coast Guard Archives

This photograph shows the 1880-era station as seen from the interior of Cobb's Island on 9 January 1930. Large quantities of wood were stacked adjacent to its kitchen and dining room. The two-story portion of the station was for offices, crew ready rooms, and had the Boatroom on the first floor, with dormitory space and living quarters of the Chief Petty Officer and Officer in Charge above. The small white buildings set over the marsh on the right were outhouses.

Schooner Wrecked on Shoals

The five-mast schooner Frank M. Deering *is now lying on the shoals seven miles south, southwest of Cobbs Island, where she was lodged at noon Tuesday, 6 February, when driven in during a severe snow storm and gale. Her captain, L. G. Pickett and her crew of ten men are safe, having been taken off the wrecked schooner when her distress signals were observed at Cape Charles, and the Coast Guard officers at Norfolk, Va. notified of her condition and the cutter* Manning *dispatched to her assistance.*

Captain Pickett communicated with Cobbs Island Station Wednesday night and stated that he would leave on the first boat Thursday morning for Cape Charles and would go to Norfolk to make his report at the Customs house.

According to Captain Pickett, the Deering *encountered a heavy snowstorm and gale in passing the reefs and the vessel was blown inshore. When she struck, it was evident that no effort on the part of the crew or himself could save her and distress signals were raised.*

At the Cape Henry station they were picked up at five o'clock Tuesday afternoon and the Coast Guard office in Norfolk notified. The Manning *was sent out, reaching the wreck at ten o'clock on Tuesday night. The members of the crew lowered themselves by ladder into boats sent to the schooner by the* Manning *and they landed on Cobbs Island. Reports one member of the crew was ill and had to be lowered into the boats accompanied by Captain Pickett, who said that the man in question was suffering from a bad cold and was not injured, but slipped and fell down on the deck. The* Deering *was lying in five feet of water with three feet of water in the holds when the* Manning *reached her. On account of the shoals no boats were permitted to get within a mile and a half of the distressed vessel except in small boats in the heavy seas which continually washed over the wrecked schooner as it required skillful maneuvering to get alongside the* Deering.

The Deering, *according to Captain Pickett, was proceeding from New Haven, Conn., to Norfolk, in ballast. Joseph Clark and brother of Norfolk, are part owners of the vessel, it was understood. Information obtained indicated that it will be left to a salvaging company to float the vessel although she is in immediate danger of pounding to pieces should a heavy storm arise.*

Two years ago, about this time, the Carroll G. Deering, *the sister ship of the* Frank M. Deering, *and owned by G. D. Deering, of Bath, Me., owners of both vessels and seven others, was found ashore on Diamond Shoals with all sails set but with her captain and crew missing. A passing ship discovered the plight of the vessel, and receiving no response to endeavors to communicate with her, notified the Coast Guard and when the* Carroll G. Deering *was boarded, it was found that she was in perfect condition and even the dinner dishes on the table were undisturbed but the captain and crew were nowhere in sight nor have they been seen since.*

At the time hundreds of theories were advanced concerning the mysterious disappearance of the captain and men but nothing has come of them to this day. For some time the Carroll G. Deering *was regarded as a "mystery ship" following her peculiar experience but before she could be salvaged she was broken up on the shoals during a heavy storm.*

—*Peninsula Enterprise,* 10 February 1923

Picket Boats Seize Contraband Liquor

During the Prohibition Era, the lower Eastern Shore was a haven for incoming foreign contraband liquor and the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay was the gateway to dry markets such as Baltimore, Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia. Coast Guard Stations were routinely called upon to stem the rum war as it quietly exploited the intricate shadowy web of waterways on the Eastern Shore. The Sixth Coast Guard District fielded a thinly stretched fleet of seven picket boats responsible for some fifteen hundred tidal inlets along the seaside—an improbable scenario for blockade duty. Cobb's Island Station Picket Boat CG-2390 routinely worked a patrol that included Ship Shoal Inlet, Myrtle Inlet, New Inlet, Smith Island Inlet, Oyster, and Magotha, Virginia, and all waterways between the mainland and barrier islands from Hog Island south to Smith Island. Sixth District Chief C. J. Sullivan once noted in frustration that CG-2390's solo fifty-mile patrol beat was populated by nearly fifteen hundred vessels each day.[36]

On 2 July 1930, 541 cases of imported contraband liquor were seized by federal agents at Thomas' Wharf, Virginia. Augmented by picket boats from Cobb's, Wallops, and Assateague Island Stations, the seizure was valued at between $80,000 and $100,000. At the time, it was reported to be the largest ever made on the Eastern Shore of Virginia.[37] Sixth District Commander James A. Price noted, "The men engaged in the seizure of the liquor are worthy and deserving of praise. . . . Not only was the place where the liquor was stored difficult to locate, but some of the men captured bear noteworthy reputations for being extremely dangerous to handle. On this occasion, they did not surrender without it being necessary for the force to resort to firearms to frustrate their escape."[38]

These were the private houses located across Loon Channel on Little Cobb or Cardwell Island. The photograph was taken from Cobb's Island Station on 9 January 1930.

Courtesy of United States Coast Guard Archives

The great "August Storm" swept the Virginia Eastern Shore on 23 August 1933. The storm decimated the barrier islands and many of the Shore's towns. On Hog Island, the barrier island town of Broadwater was all but destroyed and residents abandoned the island. Their houses were moved to mainland settlements such as Willis Wharf, Red Bank, and Oyster. On Cobb's Island, the storm heavily damaged the Coast Guard Station and took the life of George W. Cobb.

Entries from the Keeper's Log

Keeper's Log: Wednesday, 23 August 1933, Cobb's Island Station

Telephone tests made; no communication north or south of the station. Picket boat No. 2305 and crew unable to return to station and proceeded to Oyster, Va. for shelter.

At 7:00 AM the northeast hurricane and high tide began to sweep the station and at 7:30 AM the barn, outside toilets, coal bin, flagpole was swept away. At 7:40 AM kitchen parted from main building and boathouse was rocking very badly. There was no signals of distress to be seen. And there was nothing could be done at this situation. I immediately ordered everybody to get in lifeboat No. 1205, which consist of the crew at this station, my wife and three children, Preston T. H. Ayers BM1C, daughter and her girlfriend which was visiting at this station. At 8:00 AM launched power lifeboat No. 1205 which everybody was aboard of same and proceeded toward the mainland. After no signs of Mr. Cobb at the cottages.

This photograph is believed to have been taken during the 23 August 1933 storm looking across Loon Channel toward Cobb's Island. The buildings on the horizon were small lodges attributed to the Cobb family.

Courtesy of Rick Kellam

8:00 AM to 9/10 P.M. Arrival at Taylor's Creek in power lifeboat No. 1205 at 10:30 AM. At 8:00 AM Picket Boat No. 2305 left Oyster, Va. and rendered assistance to Mr. Lee Steelman of Oyster, Va. and Solomon Daisey of Oyster, Va. which was being swamped at sea. Rescued same and brought them to Oyster, Va. Arrival there at 11:30 AM. . . .

At 12:30 PM I was informed by Mr. George West of Oyster, Va. that it was some people in distress at Ship Shoal Inlet. I immediately ordered picket boat and crew to proceed for scene. They arrived at same and rendered assistance to power boat . . . owned by A. J. Rayfield of Oyster, Va. which was being swamped by the sea. And brought him to Oyster, Va. At 1:00 PM Afternoon had sent picket boat no. 2305 and crew to Ship Shoal Inlet left Oyster, Va. and went to Taylor's Creek to get power life boat No. 1205 to come to Cobb Island and see if there was anything that could be done. Upon my arrival, found that life boat was aground. I as such returned back to Oyster, Va. to wait for picket boat arrival. She arrived at 8:00 PM and there was no boats or distress to be seen.

8:00 PM to Midnight. At 8:30 PM left Oyster, Va. in picket boat No. 2305 and proceeded toward Cobb Isl. While en route to Cobb Island the propeller struck some wreckage, due to darkness and it being so much wreckage in the channel and I did not consider it safe to proceed any further returned to Oyster, Va. at 9:00 PM. No inspection made due to Abandon Station. Thirteen rations issued this date.

Keeper's Log: Thursday, 24 August 1933, Cobb's Island Station

Midnight to 8:00 AM. At 6:00 AM left Oyster, Va. in picket boat No. 2305 to return to station. Upon arrival found several pilings was missing under main building. Dory No. 4152 missing. Dinghy No. 2698 missing. Two (2) steel drums of 108 gallons of gasoline missing, One (1) steel drum 170 gallons of gasoline, tool box and tools, eight (8) steel drums 55 gallons each. And (1) kerosene tank with pump complete. Gasoline tank . . . drill cart and equipment, refrigerator, ten (10) hardwood chairs, two (2) compact stoves and Crawford Range and a large majority of cooking utensils. Boathouse seriously damaged. And two (2) 3500-gallon water tanks. All of George Cobb's houses had washed away and no sign of craft belonging to Mr. Cobb was found. A. A. Hudson was with the Cobb boys during this search and Hudson found one boot, oil slicks and a jumper on the drill pole.

8:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Left Station at 9:00 AM while en route to Oyster, Va. sighted distress signal and proceeded for scene. Arrived at scene at Gull Marsh and took onboard Roland Wise of Chincoteague, Va., George Marshall and Paul Lafferty of Oyster, Va. from a boat which was submerged. And carried them to Oyster, Va. Arrived there at 12:00 PM. I ordered the crew to get a supply of water and provisions and return to station and upon their arrival to station to go and search the beaches and creeks for Mr. George W. Cobb's body. Left Oyster, Va. and went to the Commander's Office at Chincoteague, Va. to report all facts and damages done at this station and the crew returned to this station at 3:00 PM.

4:00 PM to Midnight. Power boat No. 1205, aground at Taylor's Creek. The crew at this station looked over the island and creeks and no signs of Mr. Cobb's body was found. They returned to the station at 7:30 PM. Leave life boat No. 1205 aground in Taylor's Creek, Va. with hole in port bow. Returned to station from Chincoteague, Va. at 8:00 PM. No liberty granted this day due to conditions at the station. Picket CG-2305 omitted, crew is standing by station. Patrols on beach omitted. Boardwalk of 1800 feet washed away. Thirteen (13) enlisted men present. Thirteen rations issued this date. 9:00 PM inspected station. All lights out except standing lights.

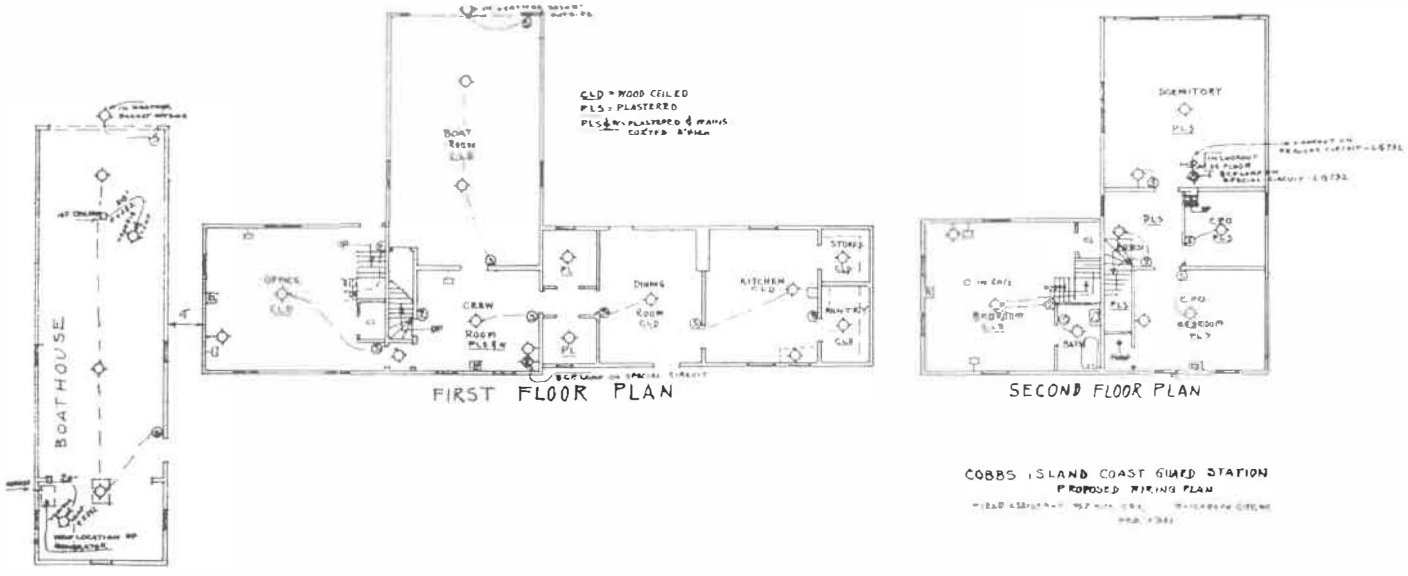
Keeper's Log: Friday, 25 August 1933, Cobb's Island Station

Midnight to 8:00 AM. No telephone tests made. All telephone lines have been down north and south of this station. At 6:00 AM sent picket boat CG-2305 and crew to Oyster, Va. to bring Warren Cobb and Freeman Cobb to this station . . . to look for father.

8:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Picket boat CG-2305 and crew returned to station with above received same. At 8:30 AM inspected station and boathouse. Found same to be in previous condition. At 9:00 AM sent William E. Collins, surfman No. 4, and Joseph T. Spanose, surfman No. 9, with Warren Cobb and Freeman Cobb in power surfboat No. 3578 to search for Mr. George Cobb. All crew employed cleaning station floors from 9:00 to 11:30 AM. Stanley G. Phillips, surfman No. 10, went on 47 hours liberty at 11:50 AM. Edgar K. Smith, surfman No. 6, absent in duty. No drills held. Crew employed looking for George Cobb and cleaning about the station. Power lifeboat No. 1205 aground at Taylor's Creek with hole in port bow.

4:00 PM to Midnight. John W. Williams, surfman no. 7, went on 47 hours liberty at 4:30 PM. At 4:30 PM Picket boat CG-2305 and crew left station with Warren Cobb and Freeman Cobb to carry them to Oyster, Va. Arrived at 5:30 PM. Picket boat CG-2305 and crew returned to station from the above duty at 7:00 PM. Picket boat

This February 1931 drawing shows proposed locations for installation of electric lights and switches in the 1880-era Cobb's Island Station. The electrical generator was to be located inside the rear of the Boathouse. Special "in-weather sockets" were to be provided at the Boathouse and Boatroom doors.



Courtesy of United States Coast Guard Archives

CG-2305 patrol omitted. Crew standing by station. Patrols on beach omitted, boardwalk washed away. 9:00 PM inspected station. All lights out, except standing lights. Thirteen (13) enlisted men present; thirteen (13) rations issued this date.[39]

***Fishing Trawler Abandoned** at Sea*

All Efforts of Three Coast Guard Crews Are to No Avail

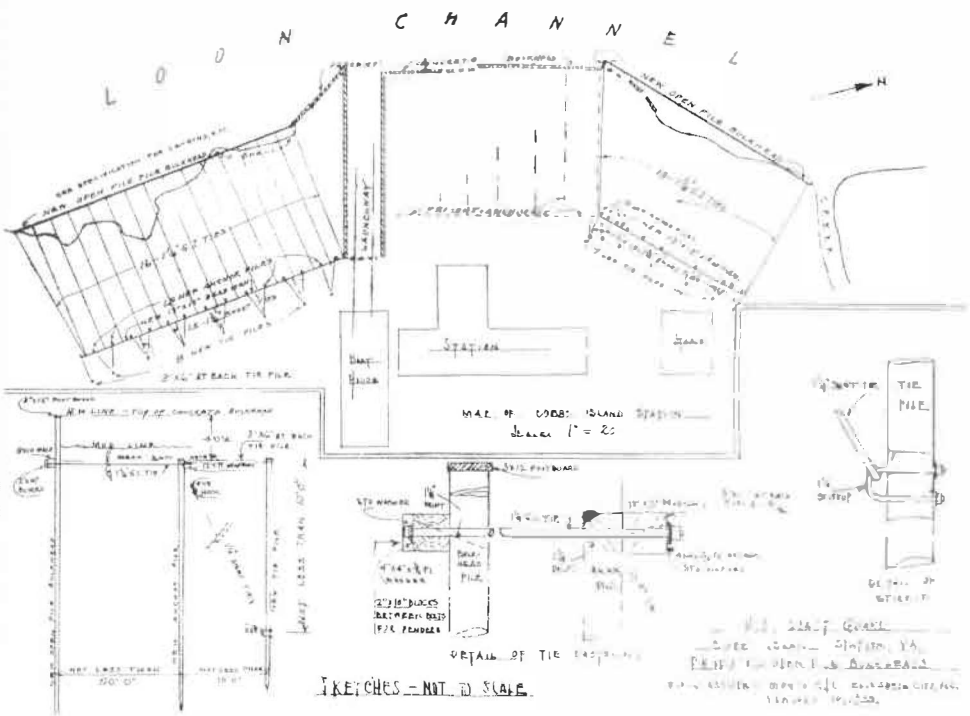
The fishing trawler John Leonard *of Atlantic City, N.J., was driven ashore near New Inlet, Thursday morning just before day break and all efforts of three Coast Guard crews to float the ship were without avail and she was abandoned as a total wreck late Saturday night.*

The distress signals were sighted by Cobbs Island lookout and Captain Maurice Tarr went to the scene with a crew comprised of M.. M. Mo. 2nd Class (L) Edward Elliott and Surfmen Roland Tunnel and Early Doughty. Crews were then called from Smith's Island and Hog Island. Hog Island's crew was composed of Capt. George Pruitt, M. M. Mo. 1st Class Vernon Sterling and Surfmen Bob Taylor and Charlie Massey. Smith's Island crew was composed of Herman L. Marsh in charge and Surfmen Clifton Elliott, Stanley Rooks and Heywood Boole.

Captain Nels Gregerson of Philadelphia and his crew were taken off during the day Friday and the three crews worked valiantly to float the disabled craft without success and were forced by heavy weather to abandon the ship to the high seas late Saturday.

The Captain and crew of the Leonard *were taken to the home of Capt. and Mrs. Lee Steelman of New Inlet where they were fed and housed while the Coastguardsmen were attempting to float their craft.*

—. *Northampton Times*, 28 November 1935



Courtesy of United States Coast Guard Archives

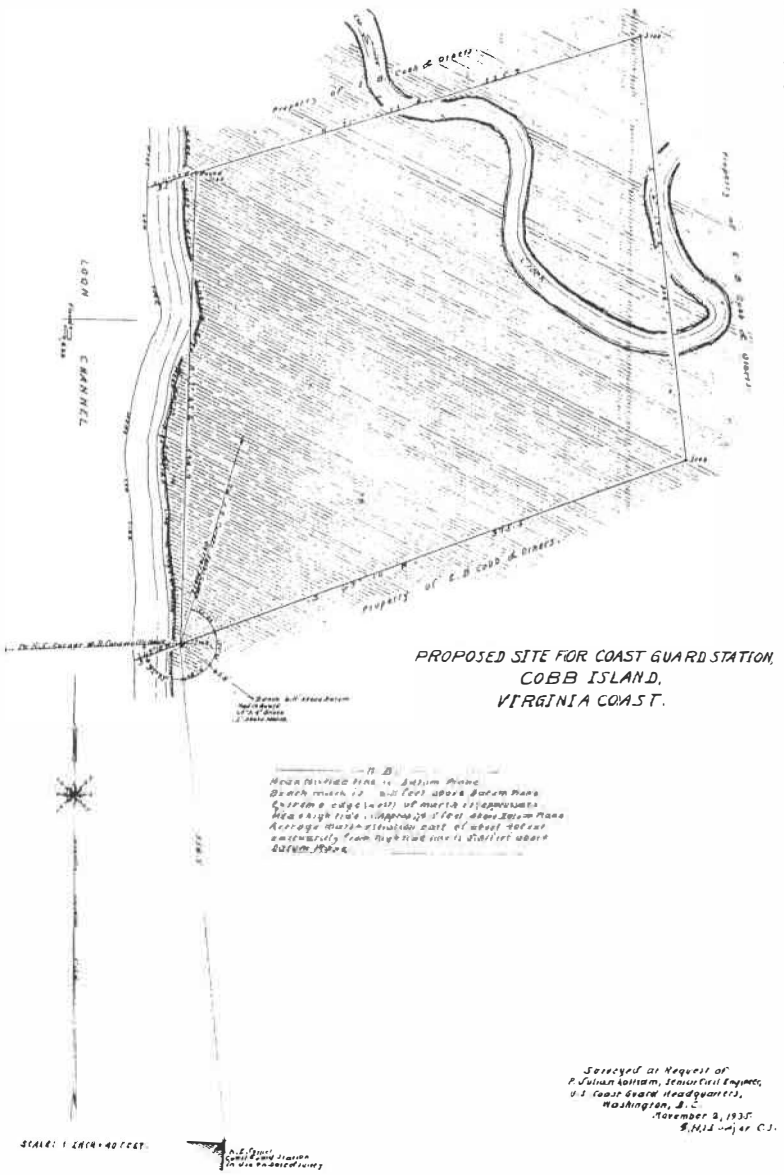
These site engineering drawings of 10 January 1930 show proposals to combat shoreline erosion with construction of additional bulkheads and seawalls. Nearly the entire front of the 1880-era Cobb's Island Station was affected by the modifications.

Section II

1935–1964: Birth

Crew and Passengers Rescued from the *Emil*

Oyster, Virginia January 20, [1936]. The crew and passengers of the motor boat Emil *were rescued Sunday, January 19, about 5 o'clock by the surfboat of Cobb's Island Coast Guard Station in charge of Leon S. Bulman, B. M. 1st class (L), Arthur L. Marsh, Mo. M.M. 1C (L), and Surfman George B. Kellam. The motor of the* Emil *stopped shortly after leaving Cobb's Island C. G. S. en route to this place and they were drifting out of the inlet when rescued.*



Courtesy of United States Coast Guard Archives

The Emil *was in command of W. H. Parker, who had taken F. A. Baxley, J. O. Sadler, J. D. Hopkins and J. P. W. Isdell to Cobb's Island Station for the purpose of viewing the site for the new Coast Guard Station at that place. During the time the boat was moored to the [1880-era] station dock a northwest gale sprang up making it impossible for the boat to lay at the dock.*

The contractors having finished their work, started back to Oyster. On account of the weather conditions, it looking very stormy and the prospect of a high seas, the power surfboat at Cobb's Station was made ready and the crew stood by to help the Emil *should assistance be needed. About 15 minutes afterwards the station look-out reported that the* Emil *was not under control and was drifting towards the shoals. Shortly afterwards the distress signal was sighted and the Cobb's crew started to the rescue.*

When they arrived alongside the Emil, *they found her drifting on the edge of the sand shoals and the sea breaking over her. A hawser was made fast to the* Emil *and she was towed from the breakers to a safe point in the lee of the beach where the men on the* Emil *were transferred to the surfboat and the* Emil *was anchored. Later in the afternoon the picket boat CG-2305 towed the* Emil *to a position about one-half mile north of Cobb's Station.*

Courtesy of United States Coast Guard Archives

Power lifeboat no. 4069 and the crew of Smith's Island C. G. S. arrived at Cobb's Island about 6:30 P.M. and offered assistance but it was not needed. The passengers, master and crew of the Emil *expressed their gratitude to the crew of Cobb's Island for rescuing them.*

—*Peninsula Enterprise,* 25 January 1936

Opposite: This 2 November 1935 property survey was used for siting the 1936-era Cobb's Island Station. One of the property corners was designated as beginning 358.5 feet from the northeast corner of the existing 1880-era station. Purchase of the property was completed in 1936–37 when the U.S. government obtained the land for $300.00 from E. B. Cobb.

Cobb's Island Gets a New Station

In 1935 a new station and adjoining boathouse were designed for Cobb's Island. The Cobb's Island Lifeboat Station was officially commissioned and established under the Coast Guard's Chincoteague-based Sixth District Group in 1936–1937. The new station's navigational position was recorded as 37°18' 09"N 76°10' 40"W or approximately seventy-five yards from the 1880-era station and seven and one-half miles southwest of the Hog Island Light.[40] The station's mission was stated, "To maintain lookout, communications, and appropriate beach patrols of obtaining early information of life or property in danger. To take action to safeguard life or property so endangered or distressed." The fourteen-person crew allowance staffed a thirty-six-foot MLB (Motor Life Boat), a thirty-foot barge, a thirty-foot UT (Utility Boat), a twenty-two-foot MRB (Motor Rescue Boat), and a fourteen-foot skiff and was provided with a half-ton truck.

This is one of the original renderings of the proposed 1935-era Cobb's Island Station.

New U.S. Coast Guard Station at Cobb's Island

The new Station which is about ready to take the place of the old station is situated on the west side of Cobb's Island and about 1000 feet north of Loon Channel. A channel and a good-sized boat basin have been dredged for a harbor with a two-track railway. The basin will come in handy for bayman and seafarers in case of storms. The dredged materials were used to fill under and around the new structures raising this surface four feet above the marsh land which at normal high tide is six inches under water.

There has been erected a one-story boathouse 36 by 56 feet, and a one-story 14-by-18-feet passageway from the boathouse to the dwelling which will be used as a generator plant and wash room. The generators supply electricity for the pumps which supply salt and fresh water throughout the dwelling and for lighting the building. The dwelling is a three-story structure, 35 by 54 feet. The first floor has a boiler room, coal bin, kitchen, mess hall, office and dayroom; second floor has six bedrooms with accommodations for 16 men; third floor has a large room under the watch tower, also a large room to the north and south of it. These can be used for storage.

The most interesting part of the dwelling is the watch tower which is 13 by 19 feet, doors to the north and south with the balance covered by windows. The tower floor is 40 feet above sea level and a great view for watching is possible.

The floors throughout the dwelling are covered with linoleum which from an economical point of view will save coal and will also be sanitary as they can be kept clean and polished better than any wood flooring. The exterior views of the building are beautiful and a credit to the Coast Guard.

The crew of Cobb's Island Station is composed of the following: Tapan F. Phillips, C.B.M. (L); Leon S. Bulman, B. M. 1c., (L); Arthur L. Marsh, Mo. M.M. 1c (L); Charles E. Elliott, Mo. M.M. 2c (L) and Surfmen Early J. Doughty, Edgar K. Smith, Colie R. Killmon, Ralph O. Elliott, Roland W. Tunnell, Chalmers B. Hornsby, George B. Kellam and Robert F. Sterling.

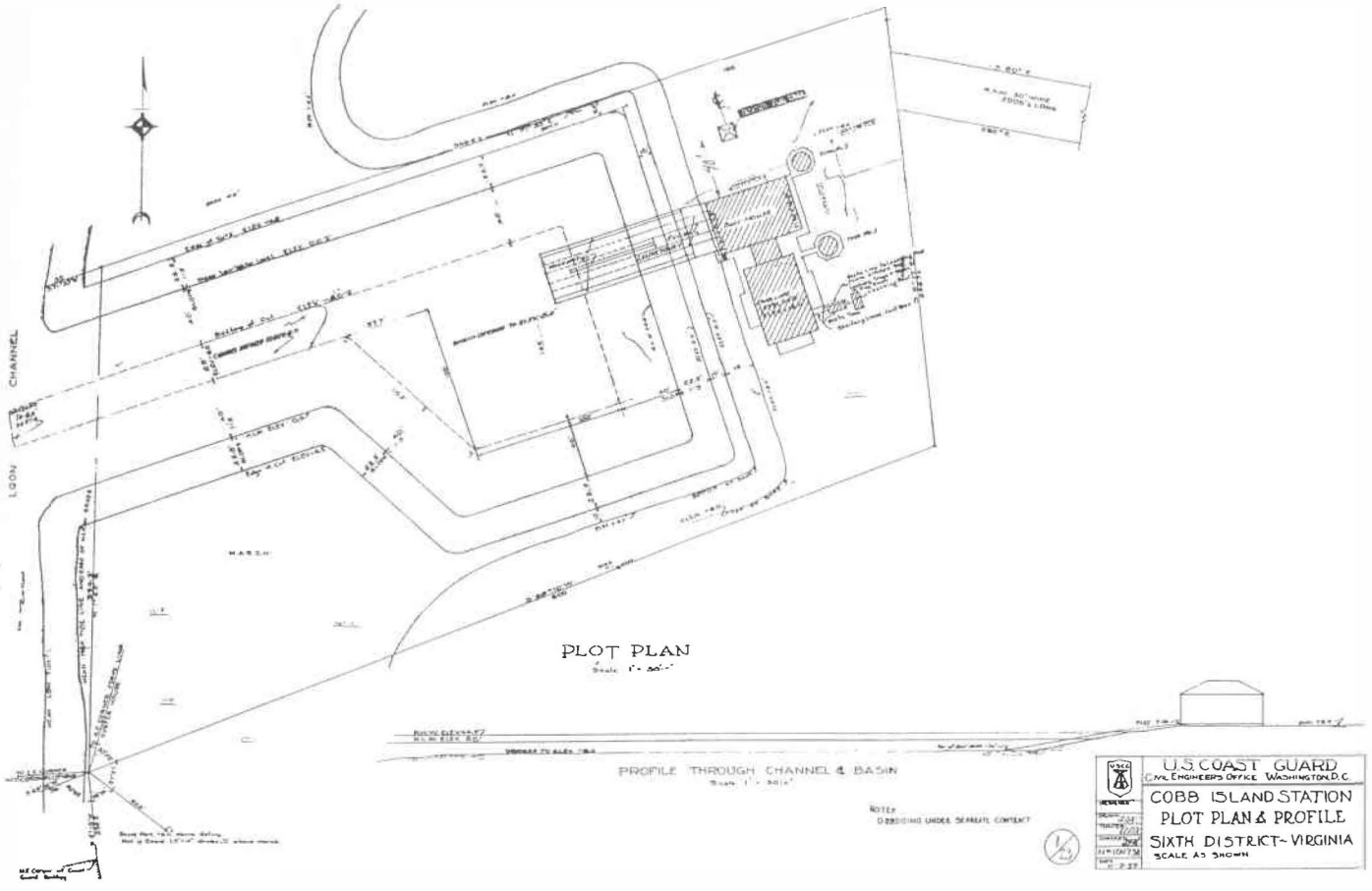
—*Peninsula Enterprise,* 30 January 1937

When this photograph was taken, the launchways and docks for the Cobb's Island Boathouse had not yet been installed. These watermen are posing in the boat basin with a load of oysters.

Courtesy of United States Coast Guard Archives

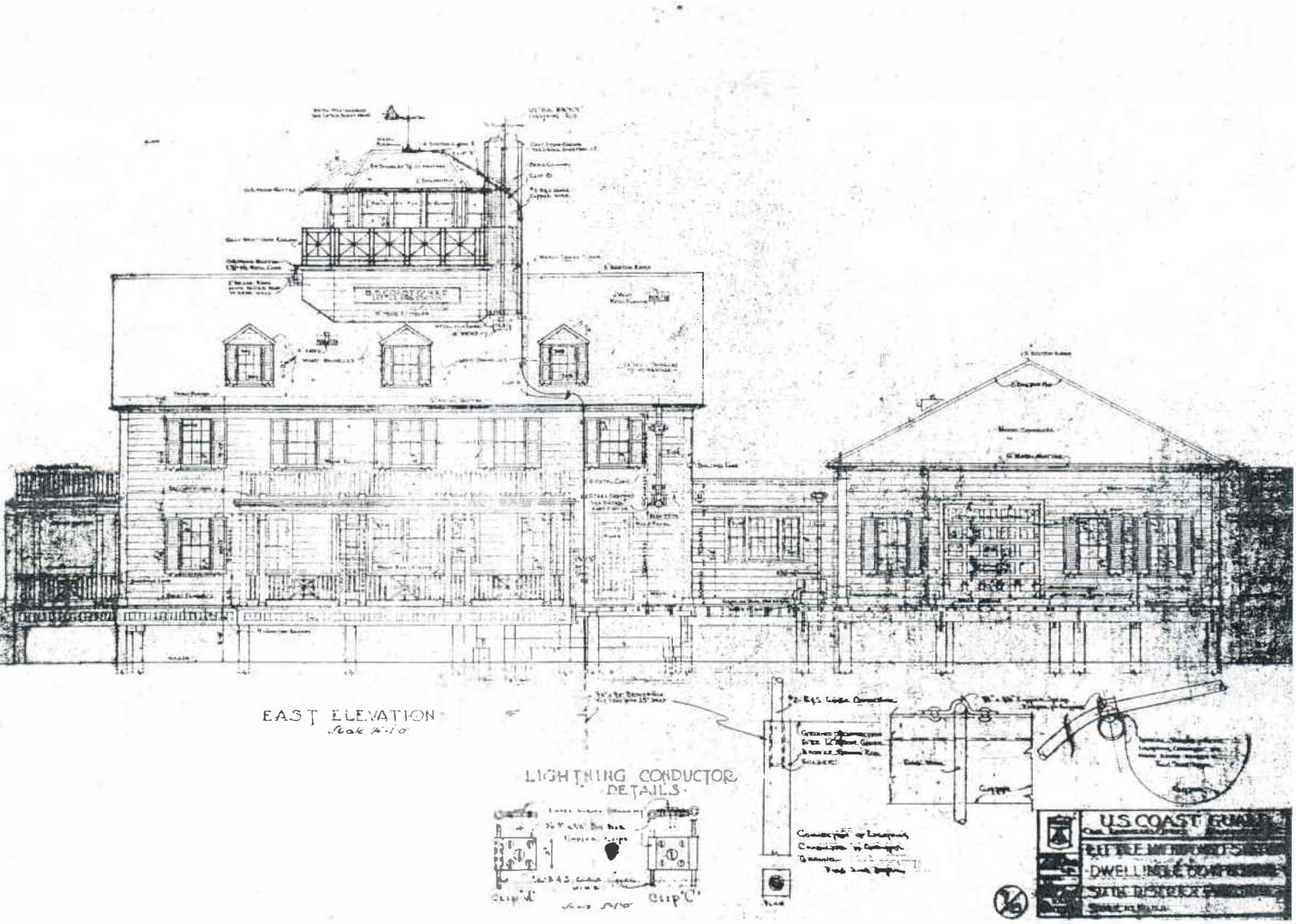
Station design began to exhibit a sharp reduction in ornament and extraneous fenestration with the 1915 merging of the Revenue Cutter Service and Life Saving Service. This rational modernist architectural response represented the newly unified military-like mission of the two agencies. The new facility at Cobb's Island was one of a number of similarly patterned stations constructed during the same era. These included nearly identical Eastern Shore facilities at Little Machipongo Inlet, Cedar Island, and Metompkin Inlet. The stations at Little Machipongo Inlet and Cobb's Island had flattened cupolas centered on the ridge lines of the Main Building. Each cupola provided station crew with a panoramic unobstructed view of the horizon.[41] With exception of an added catwalk on top of the cupola's roof, the Little Machipongo Inlet Station was an identical twin to the Cobb's Island Station. Two other stations at Parramore Beach and Cedar Island did not incorporate a significant cupola; however, their configurations were very similar. Today this station type is referenced as the "Roosevelt Era" design genre as applied to Virginia's Eastern Shore. So called "Roosevelt Era" stations because they were constructed during Franklin Delano Roosevelt's tenure as president (1933–1945), they are architecturally characterized as Colonial Revivalism gone to sea—and were constructed under Roosevelt's "New Deal" programs such as the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and Public Works Administration (PWA).[42]

This 2 November 1935 plot plan was used for siting the 1936-era Cobb's Island Station. The drawing indicated general site modifications including location of the station buildings, depth of dredging for the entrance channel and construction of the boat basin in coordination with launchways from the Boathouse.



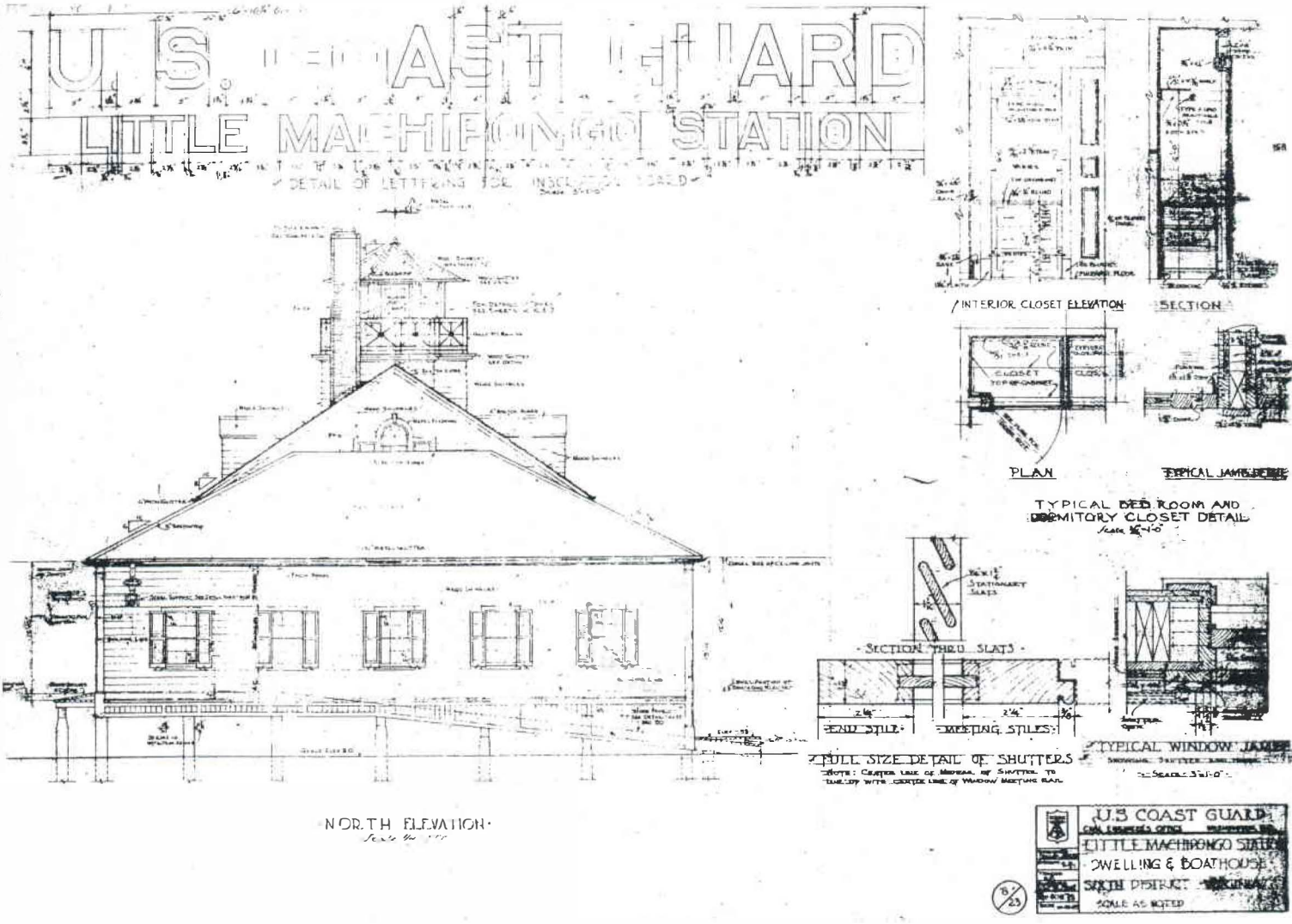
Courtesy of United States Coast Guard Archives

Hog Island. These are the original architectural drawings for the Main Building and Boathouse of the Little Machipongo Inlet Station on Hog Island.



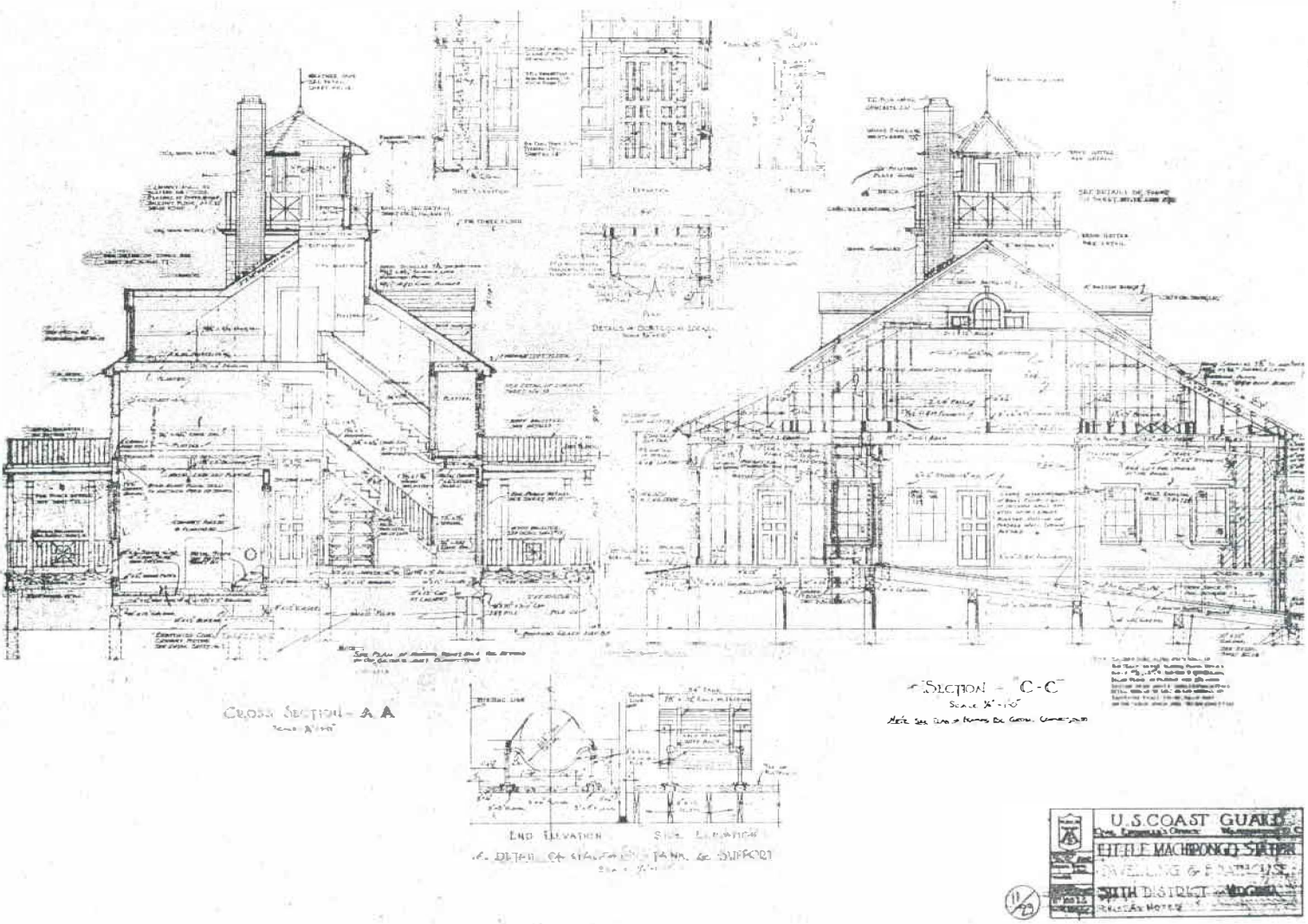
Courtesy of United States Coast Guard Archives

These drawings show elevations of the Main Building and Boathouse.



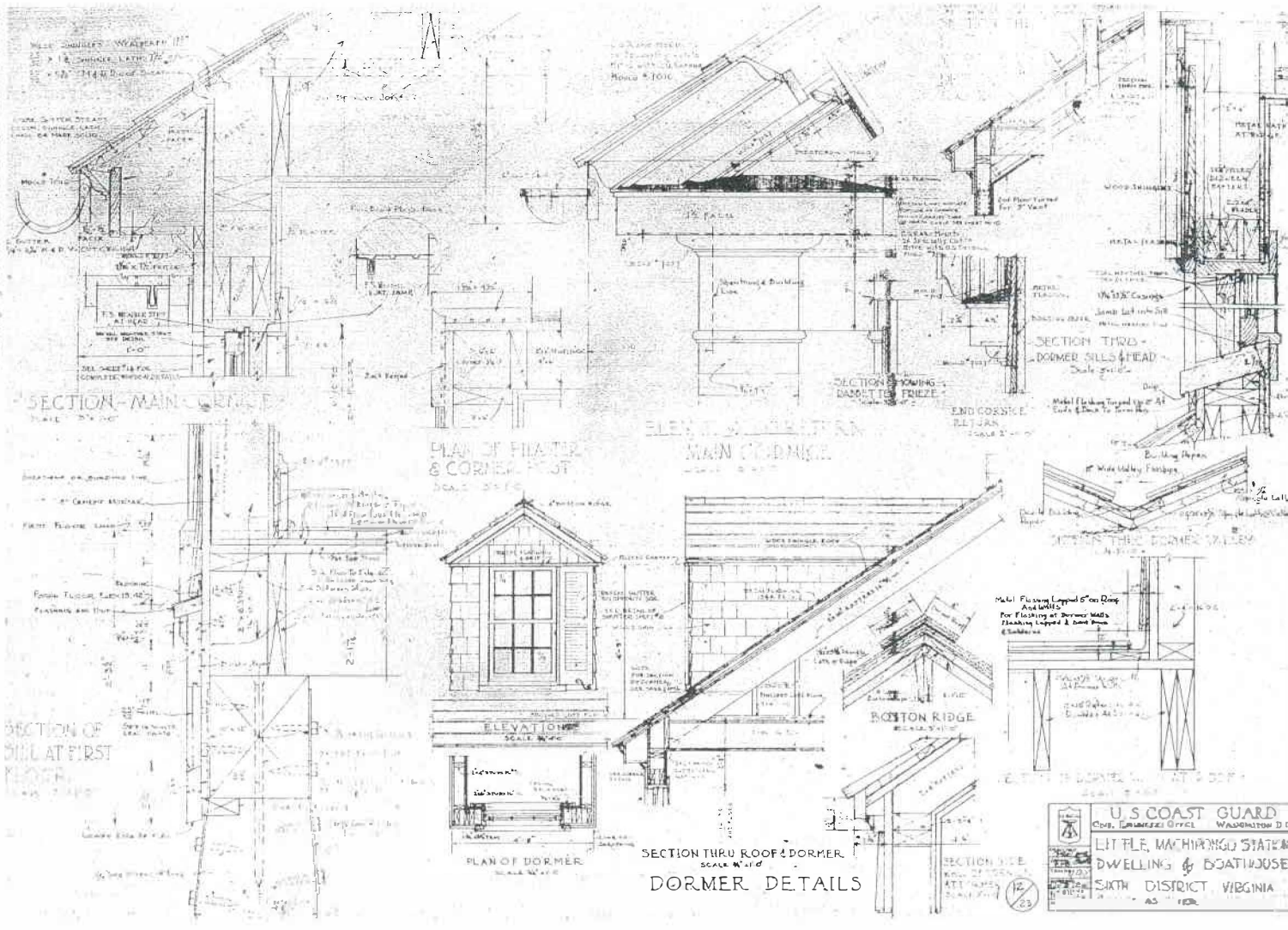
Courtesy of United States Coast Guard Archives

These drawings show special instructions for inscribing the station sign to read "U.S. Coast Guard, Little Machipongo Inlet Station" and details for doors and wooden shutters.



Courtesy of United States Coast Guard Archives

These drawings show cross sections of the Main Building and Boathouse.


Courtesy of United States Coast Guard Archives
SECTION-MAIN CORNICE
SECTION SHOWING DENTIL TOP FRIEZE
SECTION THRU DORMER SILLS & HEAD
END CORNICE ELEVATION
MAIN CORNICE
PLAN OF PILASTER & CORNER
Metal Flashing Lapped 6" on Roof And with 5" Per Flashing at Dormer Walls Flashing Lapped & Soldered
BOSTON RIDGE
ELEVATION
PLAN OF DORMER
SECTION THRU ROOF & DORMER
DORMER DETAILS
U.S COAST GUARD
LIT. FLE. MACHIPONGO STATION
DWELLING & BOATHOUSE
SIXTH DISTRICT VIRGINIA

These drawings show the cornice and dormers of the Main Building and Boathouse.

At Little Machipongo Inlet, Cobb's Island, Parramore, and Cedar Island, the Main Buildings were typically three and one-half stories with roofs punctured by projecting windows above the eave line and at the gable ends. The massing of the Main Building was increased with the addition of large first-floor veranda-like wooden porches extending from the two long building sides and open gable end. A flat-roofed one-story interstitial connection was inserted between the Main Building and the Boathouse. The Main Building and Boathouse were spare of significant architectural ornament with exception of window shutters, pronounced building corner beads and intricately designed exterior rails on the porches and cupola. The exterior siding and wooden porches were painted bright white, window shutters painted dark glossy green, and metal railings of the cupola painted gloss black. If potable water had not been collected from the station's cedar-shingled roof, it would have been painted bright red. Cisterns connected to the roof collected the drinking water. Potable water was made by periodically adding ordinary laundry bleach as a purification agent.[43]

The Roosevelt Era stations were sturdily framed of yellow pine and elevated on piles. The entire ensemble was connected by a large wooden service deck that was also set on piles. The buildings had cedar-shingle siding and were waterproofed

When this photograph was taken, the 1936-era Cobb's Island Station was still under consruction. In front of the Boathouse, the launchways and docks were still being completed. Window screens on the upper floor of the Main Building were leaning against the balcony railing as a man was painting the first floor.

with marine grade copper flashing, gutters, and downspouts. The two wharves at Cobb Station were specified at ninety-six feet long by three feet in width each. Each station also incorporated a fifty-foot-tall steel-framed flag and signaling tower. Upgraded telegraphs, radios and telephones provided off-island communication. Stations were connected with the mainland by above-ground cables strung across the marshes and open landscape. The telephone system was used to concentrate the efforts of two or more contiguous stations should a joint rescue become necessary.

Virginia Cardwell-Eldridge's grandparents owned Cardwell Island (also known as Little Cobb's Island) across Loon Channel from the station. The Cardwell family did not have telephone service at their summer house on the island and their occasional telephone calls came to them at the Coast Guard Station. When a call arrived, the station crew would summon the Cardwells using a megaphone to call across Loon Channel. Her father would row a boat over to the station to take the call or to receive a handwritten message taken by the crew.[44]

Jean Bell's father was Boatswain's Mate First Class Leon Bulman. He began his service at Cobb's Island during the early 1900s and used his own boat to report for duty at the station. Mrs. Bell often visited the station by taking a Coast Guard boat from Oyster during the late 1930s. Stationkeepers would occasionally permit her to sleep in their quarters if they were on leave. There were many lazy adolescent summer days of swimming and relaxing as a special guest of the station. She used the station's docks as a diving platform and went clamming in the shadow of the previous-era station. Most of all, however, she remembers getting really sunburned and water skiing behind the speedboat owned by station crewmember "Popsicle" Lewis.[45]

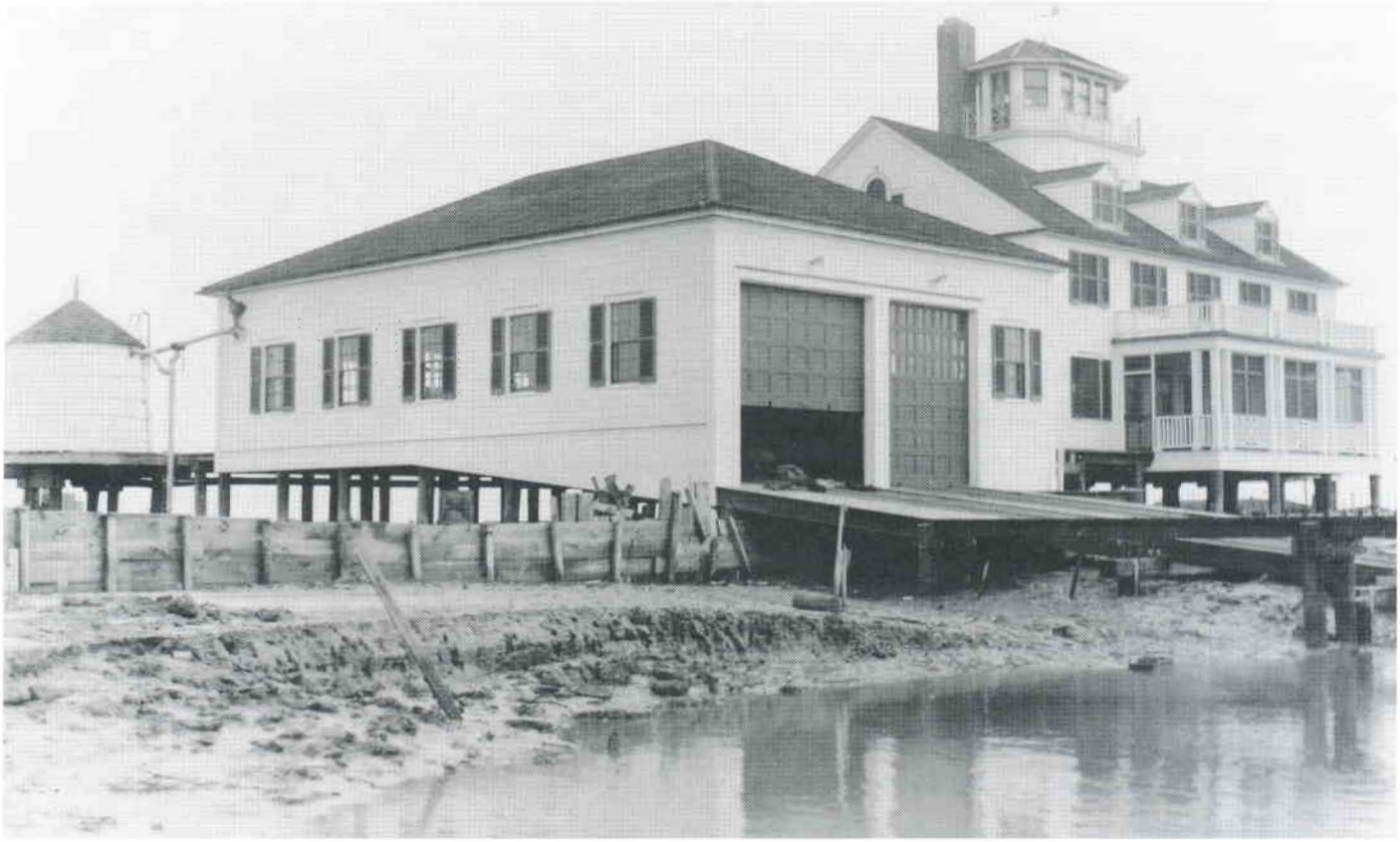
Courtesy of Rick Kellam

Coast Guard Floats Three-Masted Schooner:
Schooner* Josephine Whimsatt *Floated in Pocomoke Sound

The three-masted schooner Josephine Whimsatt, *of Washington, D.C., driven ashore on Sunday afternoon at Williams Point, Maryland was floated by the Coast Guard at 11 AM January 22nd. Crews from Smith Island and Cobb Island Stations in the Sixth Coast Guard District participated in the assistance work which released the schooner.*

The Josephine Whimsatt *was bound for Baltimore, Maryland to Pocomoke City, Maryland, and had in her hold a cargo of fertilizer. Three persons comprised her crew besides the master, William E. Brensfield of Claiborne, Maryland. After being floated and no damage being found the schooner proceeded to Pocomoke City to unload her cargo.*

—*Eastern Shore News*, 24 January 1936



Courtesy of United States Coast Guard Archives

Courtesy of United States Coast Guard Archives

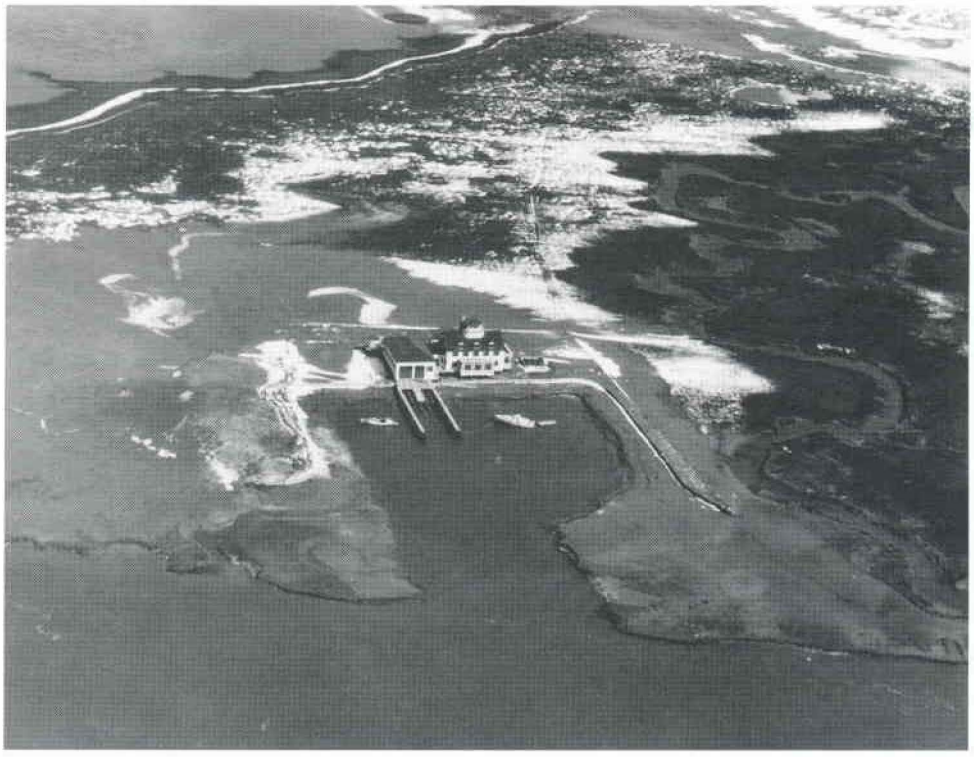
Above: This photograph shows the Boathouse.

Left: This photograph was taken across the boat basin.

Cobb's Island. These photographs were taken shortly after construction of the 1936-era station was completed.

Right: This aerial photo shows the complex of buildings and the boat basin.

Below: This photograph shows the Main Building and water cisterns.



Courtesy of United States Coast Guard Archives

Courtesy of United States Coast Guard Archives

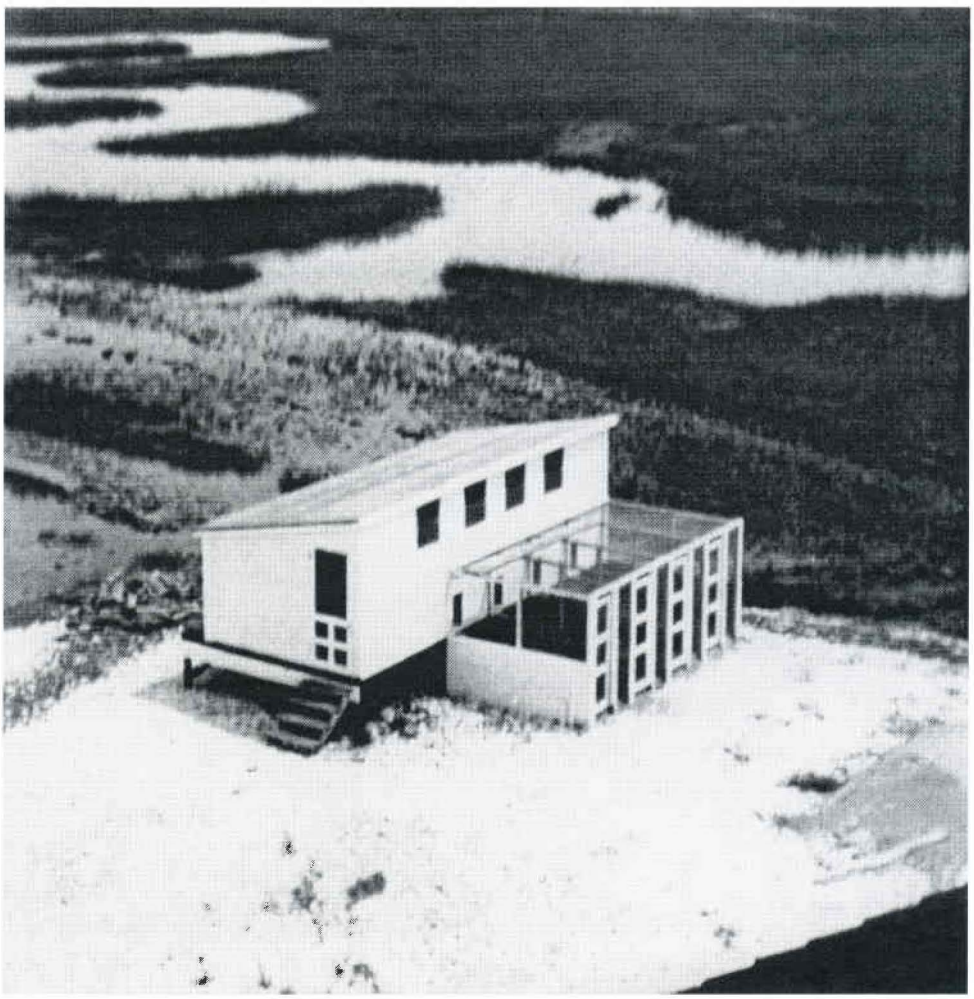
Cobb's Island Station in World War II

. . . stand an alert and efficient watch, keeping under close scrutiny all boats, aircraft, swimmers and objects coming within his scope of vision.[46]

—*General Duties of a Lookout,* U.S. Coast Guard, 1934

When the United States entered World War II, Cobb's Island Station became a part of the defenses of the Atlantic Coast. Early in the war, station crewmen were responsible for surveillance and lookout duties from the station itself. Saboteurs coming ashore along the remote coastline were considered one of the greatest wartime threats.[47] In response, the Coast Guard officially organized its Beach Patrol Division. With accompanying military dogs, station crew patrolled the coastline on foot day and night. The newly formed division was responsible for construction of a smaller station on the north end of Cobb's Island known as the Cobb Beach Station. The facility extended the effective patrol and surveillance range of the main station's crew and provided shelter for beach patrols during inclement weather.

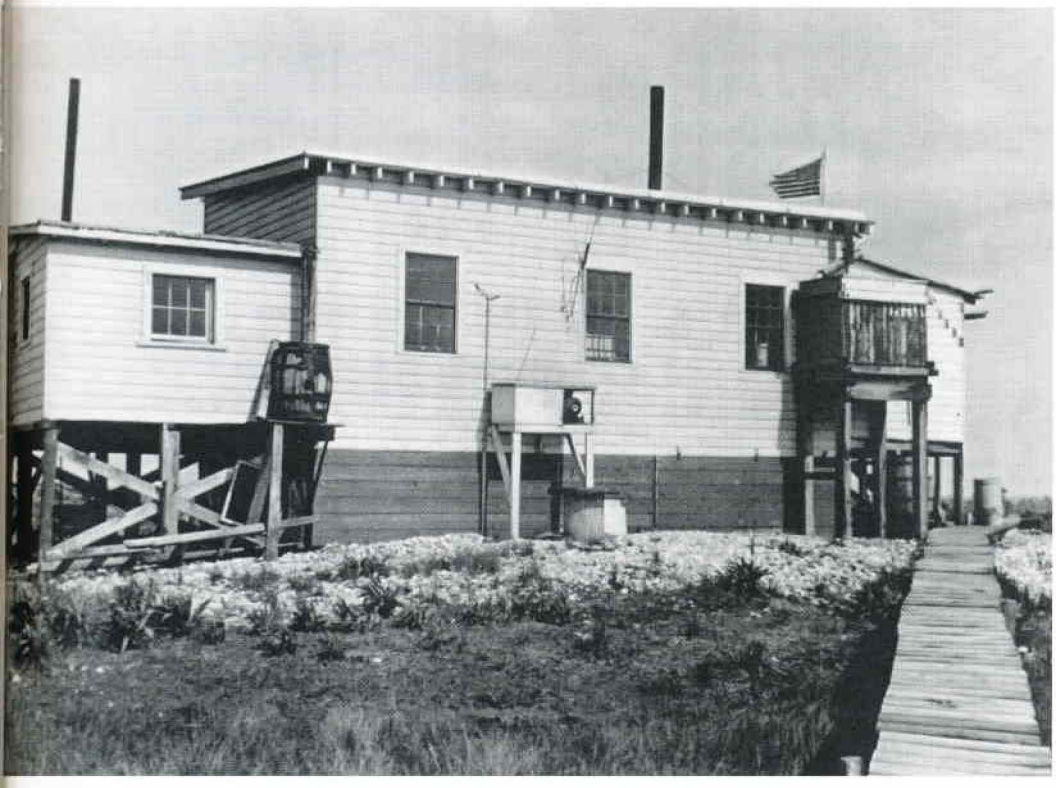
The Eastern Shore played a pivotal role in defense of the Chesapeake Bay. Coastal gun emplacements were constructed on Fisherman's Island and at Fort John Custis. Troops of the Cape Charles Defense Force were stationed throughout the



During World War II dogs accompanied beach patrols. This photograph shows the Cobb's Island Station's doghouse that was built at the edge of the marsh. After World War II the doghouse platform became the mounting platform for the station's aerial identification numbers (157).

Courtesy of Rick Kellam and the Old Coast Guard Station Museum

Courtesy of Rick Kellam and the Old Coast Guard Station Museum



Cobb Beach Station was considered a temporary facility when it was constructed during World War II. These photographs show the upgrades made during the war.

Left: Initially the Station was a simple unheated shed roofed wooden building. The outpost had a water cistern and an open space to park a jeep.

Below: When this photograph was taken in about 1943, stove heat was vented through pipes rising from the roof and an addition had been made to the building.

lower Eastern Shore. Oyster became a bivouac for Company C of the 111th Regiment.[48] As a mobile response force, the troops were to be quickly deployed on the islands as military reinforcement of the Coast Guard.[49] In early 1942, Operation Drumroll was implemented by the German Navy. The daring plan was conceived as a submarine-based assault on the shipping lanes of the Atlantic Coast.[50] Between

Courtesy of United States Coast Guard Archives

Courtesy of United States Coast Guard Archives

This Cobb's Island photograph shows the island or inland side of the Main Building and Boathouse. The two round buildings were water cisterns connected to the roof by pipes on the side of the Main Building.

January and June 1942, 397 vessels were destroyed along the Atlantic seaboard. Like other Atlantic Coast stations, the Cobb's Island crew undertook the grisly task of gathering and recovering the bodies of sailors washed ashore on the barrier islands. At least a dozen ships were lost along the Eastern Shore of Virginia, and the Outer Banks of nearby North Carolina. This section of the coast became ignominiously known as "Torpedo Junction."[51]

On 30 June 1945, approximately 171,000 enlisted personnel and officers were listed on the rolls of the United States Coast Guard. Within a year after the end of hostilities, nearly 150,000 personnel had been discharged from active service.[52]

Station Closure Hearings on the Eastern Shore

Hearings on the proposal to close seven of the 26 Fifth Coast Guard District lifeboat stations got off to a fast start on the Eastern Shore on last Monday. Rear Admiral Joseph Greenspun, USCG, headed the board which opened the first hearing at the Ocean City, Maryland firehouse. Considerable testimony from witnesses was heard in opposition to the proposed cut in the protection which these stations might afford those who operate small craft. About 35 Maryland fishermen were present.

When the Board moved down to Chincoteague in the afternoon, 42 Virginia fishermen were waiting the opening session which was held at the Chincoteague firehouse. Senator Ben T. Gunter, Jr. and Wrendo M. Godwin, Member of the House of Delegates, appeared on behalf of the assembled watermen. Admiral Greenspun conducted the interrogation and minutes were taken of the proceedings.

Testimony from those who represented the position of the Virginians who opposed the closing of Pope's Island station emphasized the dependence of watermen upon these life stations for safety for man and craft in the less frequented waters of Virginia and Maryland.

Some of the men urged the need for restoration of full crews at these stations instead of the present status of caretaker with only one or two men on watch. They admitted not many require this aid, but when they do—they really need it. Admiral Greenspun stated the position of the Board was not to consider increasing the force but to determine if any force at all was required by conditions. Briefly, whether it is necessary at this time with the modern equipment and quick movement of the Coast Guard in an emergency, it is necessary to maintain lifeboat stations manned by two to eight men every 10 to 20 miles.

Johnson's Store, Willis Wharf was the scene of the hearing on Tuesday when the closing of the Hog Island Station was discussed. Senator Gunter and Delegate Howard Adams

Workmen were examining the center dock between the Boathouse launchways and rails when this photograph was taken at Cobb's Island.

appeared in behalf of the Virginia watermen who would be affected by the closing of Hog Island Station. Over 50 were present and the plea was based substantially upon the same grounds as offered at Chincoteague, the need for protection for small craft.

When the Coast Guard will decide after Maryland, all Virginia and North Carolina hearings have been held, will not be known for some time. But there is no doubt that this routine check-up on the necessity for these stations has aroused a cumulative protest all along the coast. Back in the [1870s] when these lifeboat stations were originally backed by the Department of Commerce [Treasury], their complement was the beach patrol, the surfboat, the Lyle gun and breeches buoy, all supplemented by strong backs, arms and unlimited courage.

Now, however, the Coast Guard feels it has moved out of that era. Over a dozen speedy rescue craft are stationed at Norfolk, others at Chincoteague and four at Baltimore. Aircraft including helicopters are on call at Elizabeth City, North Carolina, and the whole district may be covered in a little over an hour in an emergency. That's O.K. for the big fellow who has all means of communication, replies the small waterman, but what about me when I break down on an isolated sandbar? Only the gulls will know I am there and I carry no homing pigeons.

—*Peninsula Enterprise*, 20 May 1949

Fishing Vessel Assisted

On 7 May 1955, Dallas O'Neal and Benjamin Jarvis of Cobb Island Lifeboat Station departed to assist the disabled fishing vessel May, *owned and operated by Walter Watson of Oyster, Va. The vessel became disabled in Sand Shoal Inlet due to engine failure and was towed back to the local dock in Oyster, Va.*

—*Eastern Shore News,* 19 May 1955

Cabin Cruiser Freed from Grounding

On 7 May 1955, Thomas J. Parsons, Dallas O'Neal and Benjamin Jarvis of Cobb Island Lifeboat Station departed to assist the disabled cabin cruiser Phyllis, *owned and operated by Milton Jones of Oyster, Va. The boat became disabled when it ran aground in Oyster channel. A line was passed to the grounded vessel and it was freed, then proceeded under its own power.*

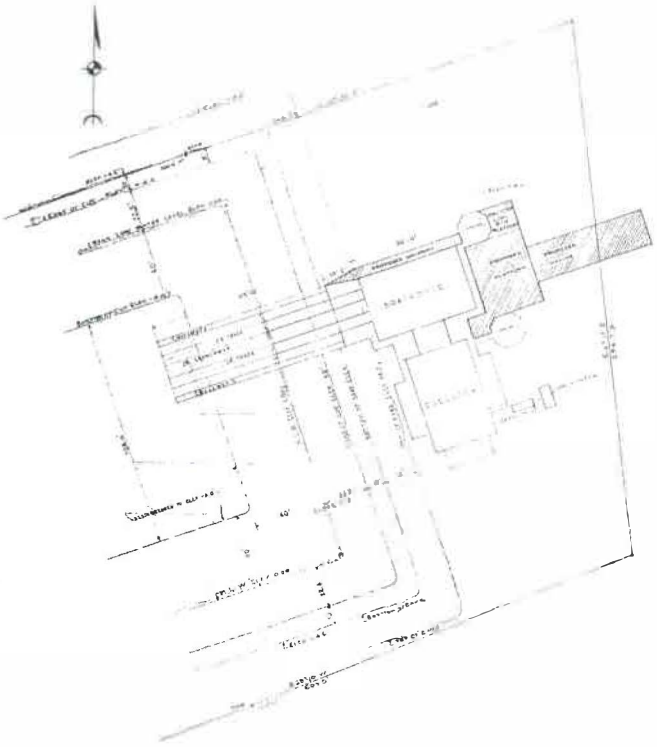
—*Eastern Shore News,* 19 May 1955

Vessel Refloated

On 8 May 1955, Thomas Parsons and Barry Andrews of Cobb Island Lifeboat Station departed to assist the vessel Margaret, *owned and operated by J. L. Merritt of Oyster, Va. The vessel became disabled when it ran aground in Mockhorn Channel. A line was passed to the grounded vessel and it was refloated, then proceeded under its own power.*

—*Eastern Shore News, 19 May 1955*

Courtesy of United States Coast Guard Archives

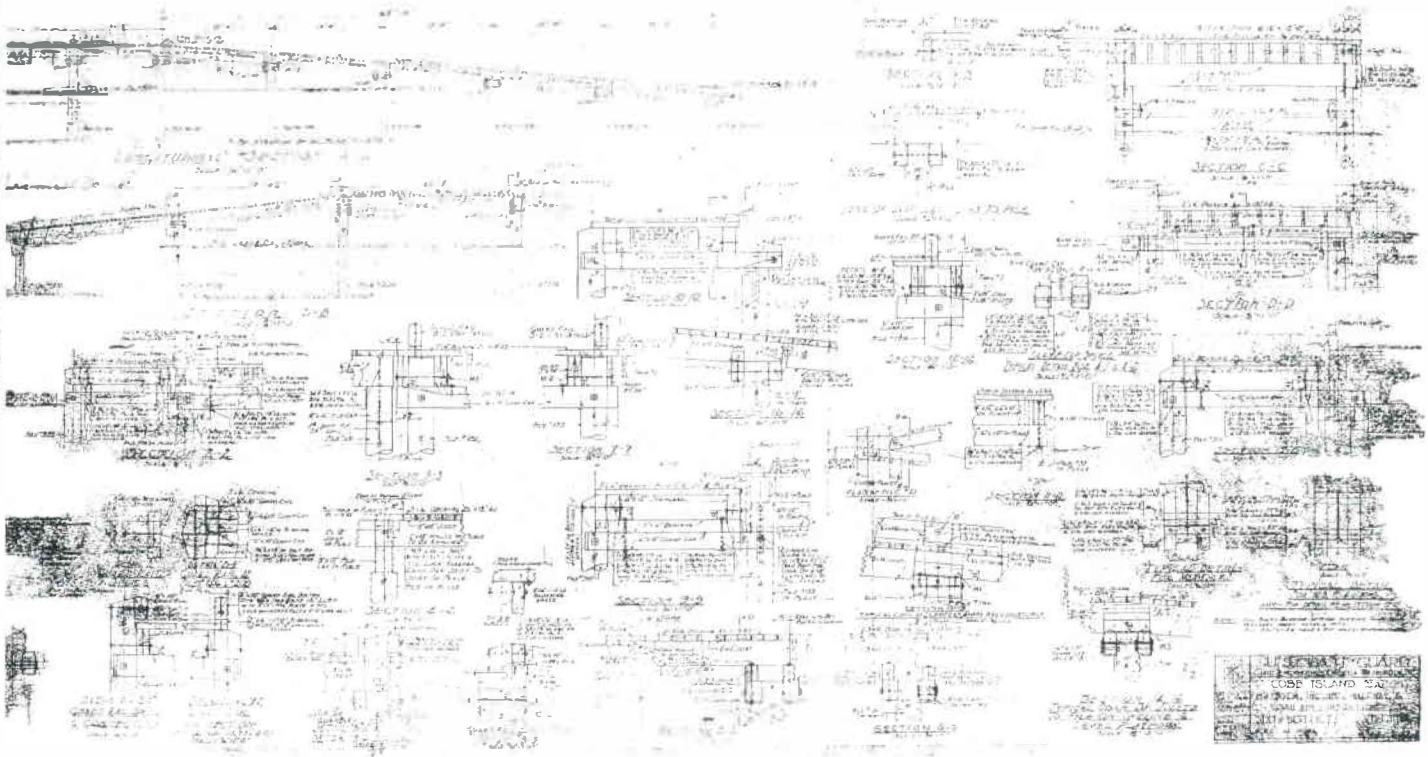


These were engineering drawings showing the addition of secondary service and coal platforms to the Cobb's Island Station. A service ramp and pedestrian walkway were also proposed.

Left: This is the plot plan.

Below: These are the detail drawings.

Courtesy of United States Coast Guard Archives



Bomber Explodes over Oyster

Four Navy Air Force personnel were killed yesterday afternoon when a P2V patrol bomber on a routine flight exploded over the town of Oyster. One of the men jumped from the flaming craft and died when he landed in a marsh. Parts of the plane were scattered over a wide area setting fire to buildings, small boats and a marine railway with a resulting property loss of $30,000.

The plane was first seen in trouble shortly before one o'clock. It apparently was on fire and its pilot endeavoring to make a crash landing on the water, but before this could be accomplished the plane started to fall apart. N. R. Steelman who had just finished lunch rushed out of his home when the explosion sounded right over the Steelman roof. A large section of the plane wing fell into his yard. Warren McCready, who has a store on the end of the dock of the West Marine Railway, saw another section of the craft plunge into his own building while another heavy portion hit the roof of the marine railway's shed a moment after three men working in it had dashed out to safety.

The storehouse of H. R. West was set afire and blazed freely, the flames sweeping over the railway and pile driver moored to the dock. A scow being towed up to anchorage by a powerboat was riddled while several powerboats at the railway were destroyed. Over half a mile from there the remains of the plane plunged into the shallow water. Jimmy Ward of Essinger's Camp found the body of the Navy man who had jumped.

Fire companies responded very promptly to the town's call for help and Cape Charles, Cheriton, Eastville and Exmore sent all their equipment but they were hampered by the extreme low tide. "The plane was seen in trouble by many persons in the town," said McCready, "but things happened so fast nobody did anything. They just stood still, without crying out any alarm."

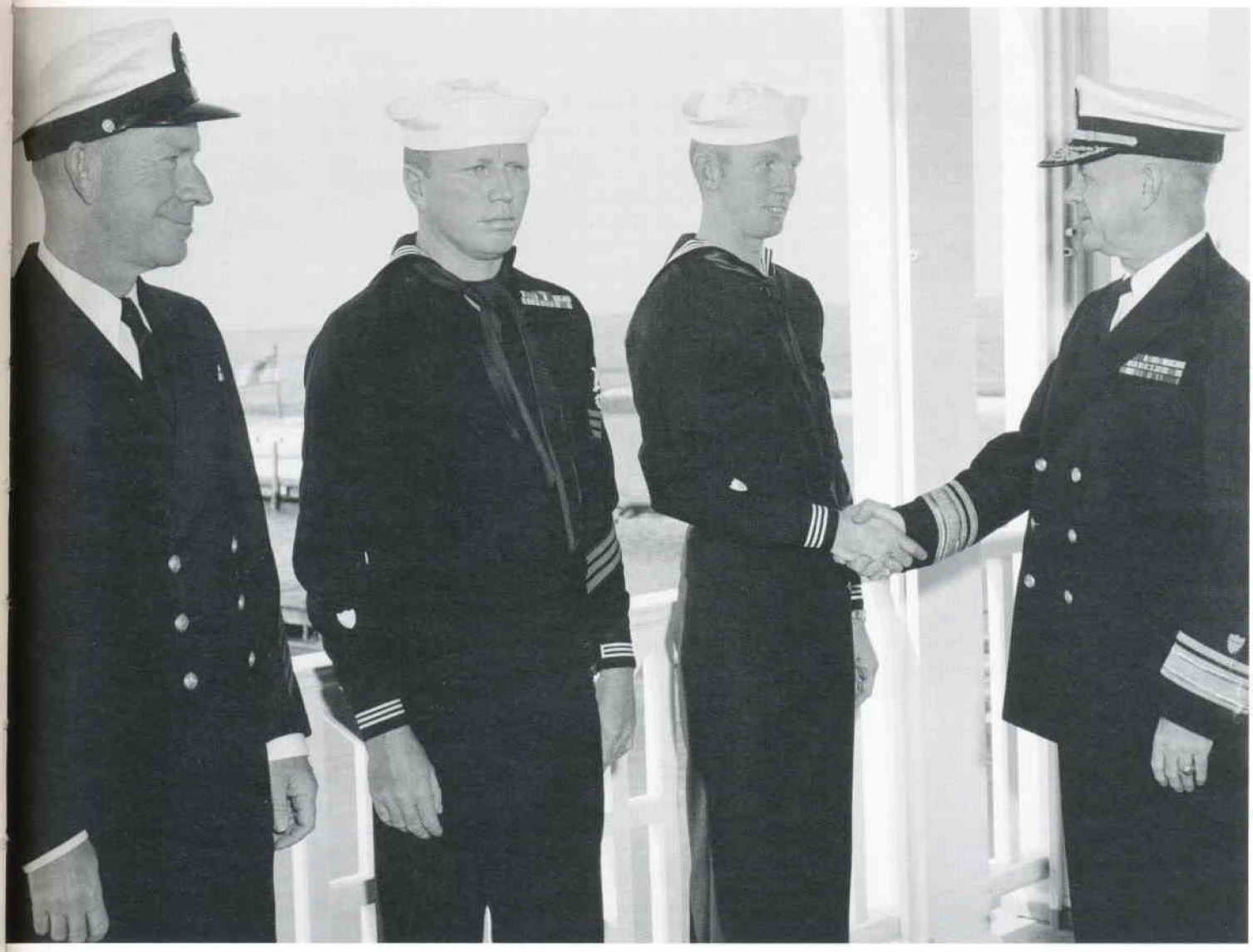
—*Peninsula Enterprise,* 12 May 1955

Engineman First Class Dallas O'Neal of the Cobb's Island Station was sent to Oyster as a part of the station crew. Because it was a military plane, the Coast Guard Station crew was charged with recovering the bodies of the perished flyers and assisting with securing the crash sites. Much of their work was performed in close proximity to the 2001 location of the Cobb's Island Station. Mr. O'Neal later recalled that it was one of the most awful experiences of his life.[53]

Three Rescued from Yacht

Coast Guard personnel from Cobb Island Lifeboat Station were presented with letters of commendation from the Commandant of the Coast Guard on 05 November, 1956, by Rear Admiral H. C. Moore, Commander of the Fifth Coast Guard District for their part in the successful rescue of the three persons on the yacht Melody II *that was breaking up on the shoals of Sand Shoal Inlet.*

Official U.S. Navy photograph, courtesy of Dallas O'Neal



This commemorative photograph shows Admiral H. C. Moore congratulating Barry L. Andrews, SN, after having presented him with a letter of commendation on 5 November 1956. The commendation letter was awarded for his sighting and reporting of the yacht Melody II, *breaking up on the shoals in Sand Shoals Inlet. From left to right: Thomas J. Parsons, BMLC, and Dallas O'Neal, EN1, also received letters of commendation.*

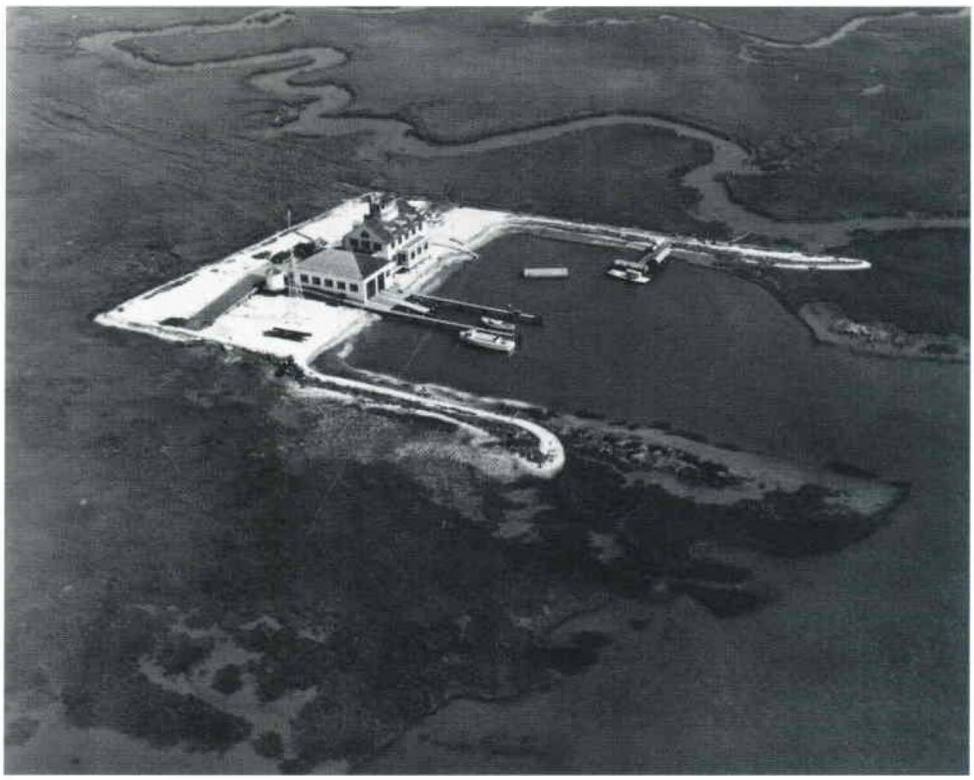
Seaman Barry L. Andrews, on lookout watch, sighted the Melody II *in trouble and immediately notified Chief Boatswain Mate Thomas J. Parsons. Chief Parsons and Dallas E. O'Neal, Engineman First Class, within a matter of minutes were under way in two boats. The Chief was able to maneuver his 36-foot motor lifeboat, with its keel pounding the bottom, near enough to effect rescue while Engineman O'Neal brought his 38-foot picket boat close enough to take off a survivor with a life ring.*

—U.S. Coast Guard press release, 5 November 1956

Little Machipongo Inlet Station Burns

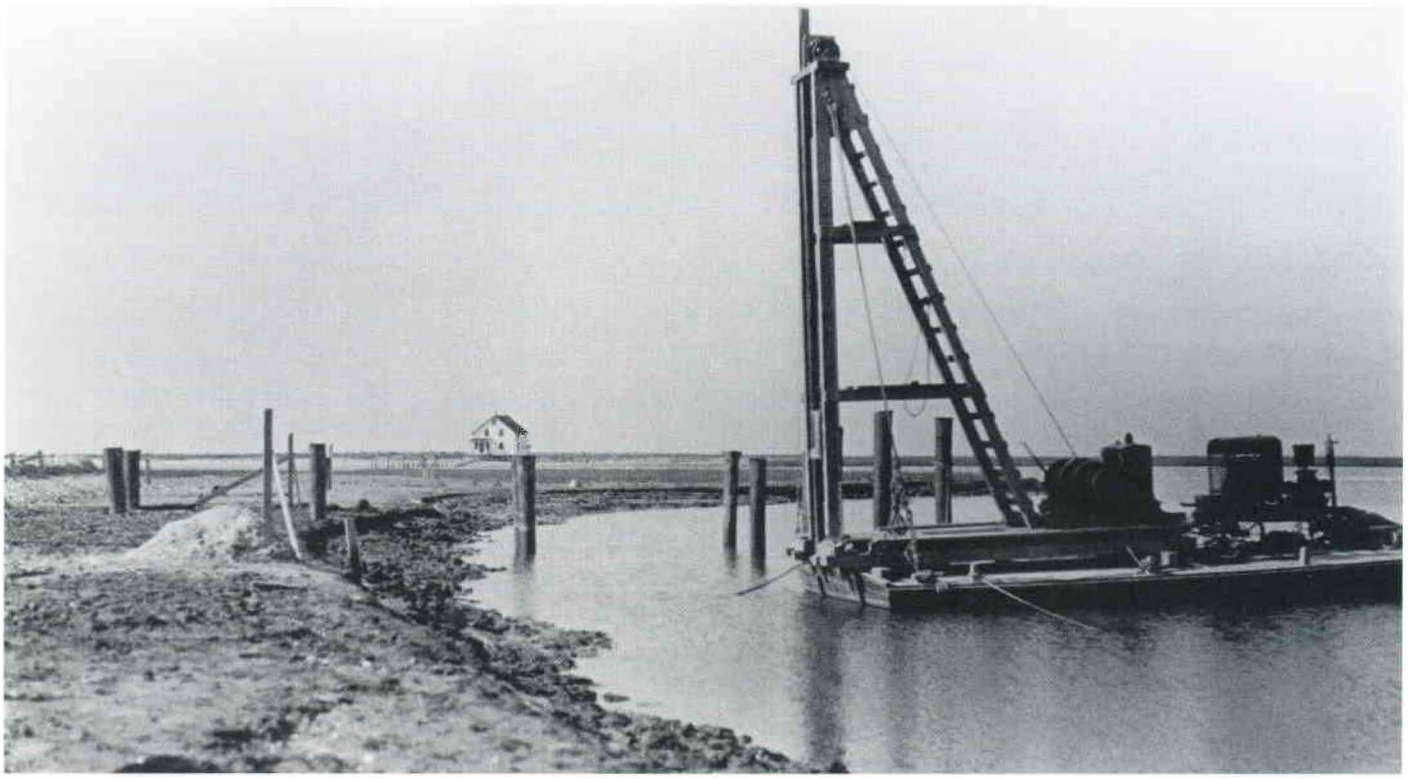
In 1957, Cobb's Island Station was assigned station number 157 under the command of Chief Petty Officer J. F. Phillips. Shortly afterward, the Little Machipongo Inlet Station was completely destroyed by fire. Subsequent investigation found that the fire originated in the station's fuel oil-fired furnace room which had recently been converted from the use of coal.[54] In 1959 an architecturally modern International Style brick and masonry station was constructed as an active duty replacement.

Right: This photograph was probably taken shortly after World War II. The Cobb's Island Station's secondary service and coal platforms, service ramp, and pedestrian walkway had been constructed. The original boat basin configuration remained generally intact. Moored in the basin was a flat-topped monitor, twenty-six-foot motor rescue boat between the two piers, and a thirty-six-foot picket boat in the foreground. A thirty-foot fuel barge and a thirty-foot monitor are tied to the second dock.

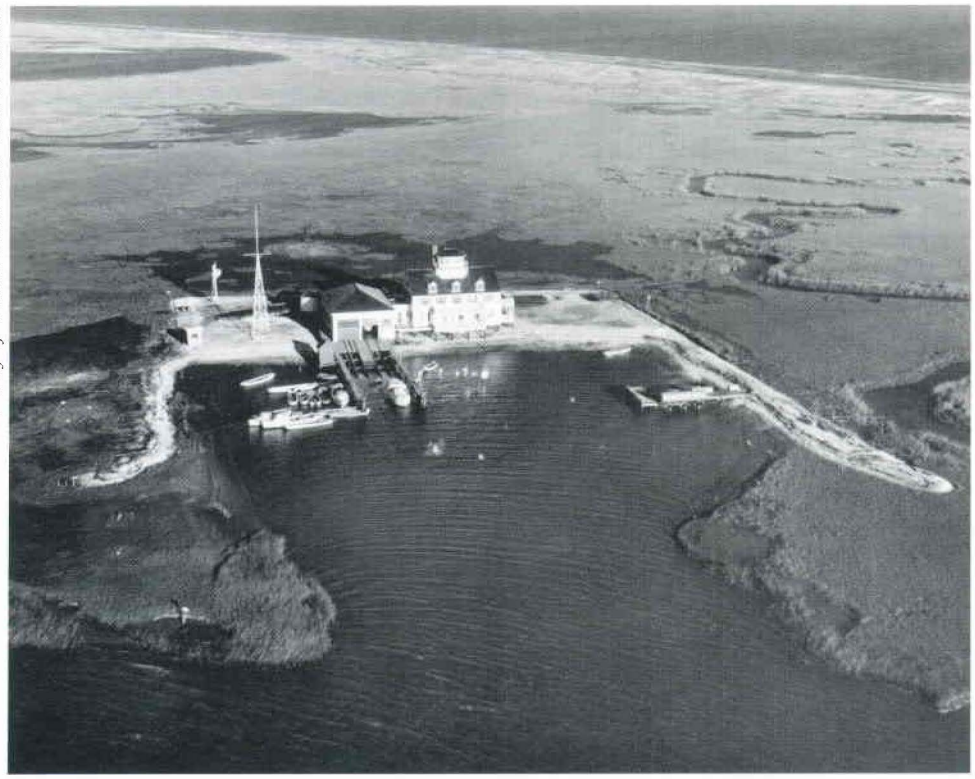


Courtesy of United States Coast Guard Archives

Below: This photograph was probably taken just before World War II and shows one of the barges used for driving pilings for wharves and docks. These piles would eventually support the Cobb's Island Station's fuel dock.



Courtesy of Rick Kellam



Courtesy of United States Coast Guard Archives

This photograph shows the Cobb's Island Station, probably during the 1950s. A twenty-six-foot motor rescue boat was in the open door of the Boathouse. A thirty-six-foot motor life boat was moored between the two wharves with a thirty-eight-foot picket boat with two motorized skiffs. A large number of commercial workboats, skiffs, and oyster scows were also present in the boat basin. On the left of the Boathouse was the signal tower, and beyond it a drill pole used for practicing breeches buoy rescues. The large tank on the dock to the right was for boat fuel storage. The station's aerial identification number 157 appeared on the platform behind and to the right of the station. Oddly, no flag appeared on the signal pole.

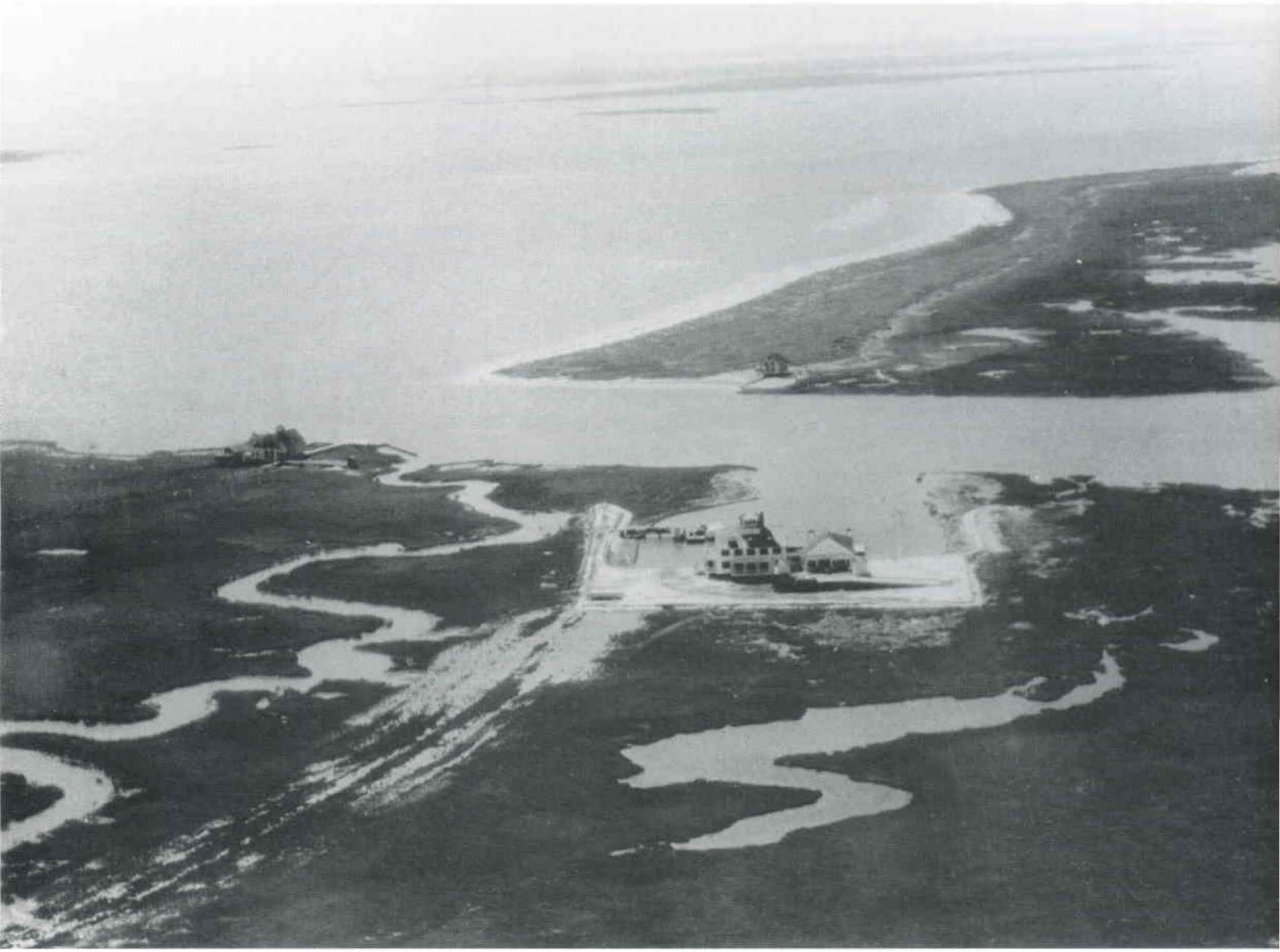
Courtesy of United States Coast Guard Archives

This photograph was taken shortly after the Ash Wednesday Storm of 1962. An oyster scow was swamped in the boat basin, and a small Coast Guard rowboat was stranded on the service deck along with other assorted debris. A thirty-foot medium utility boat was moored at the fuel dock. The 1880-era Cobb's Island Station can be seen in the background just at the edge of the marsh.

"I kept my locker. . . ."

There were three of us in a room together. It was just at the head of the stairs on the second floor. I had this really big locker. It was so big that you could keep all sorts of things inside and everyone else wanted it or wanted to trade for it. Well, one day I tried to swim across the channel in front of the station. I got caught in tide and kept fighting until I just couldn't swim anymore. . . . You know, your body just finally gives out from exhaustion. . . . Everything started to go blue and I remember thinking that I was pretty much resigned to my fate . . . it was the end for me. . . . The next thing I remember was hearing (my station mates) arguing about who was going to claim my big locker. . . . At that point, I just woke straight up and told them that I was keeping it!! . . . Thanks to my buddies, I had been fished out of the water and was lying on the deck of the forty-foot power surfboat. I was really lucky that day and am still thankful for my life being saved, but by gosh, I kept my locker. . . . [55]

—William Russell, U.S. Coast Guard, Cobb's Island Station



This photograph shows the relationship of Cobb's Island to Sand Shoal Inlet and Cardwell or Little Cobb's Island. The 1880-era station is to the left of the 1936-era station.

Coast Guard to Close, Open, Expand Stations on Shore

The United States Coast Guard is planning to close its lifeboat stations at Metompkin Inlet, Little Machipongo and Cobb's Island, reduce its facilities at Assateague and establish a new station at Cape Charles. In addition, enlargement is planned for the Parramore Station.

In a release this week the Fifth Coast Guard District stated that it would disestablish the Little Machipongo, Cobb's Island and Metompkin Inlet Stations within the next year if the recommendations to do the same are approved. The Cobb's and Metompkin Stations are older facilities, but the Little Machipongo Station was built within the past six years and is of modern brick construction.

On the Assateague Station there was going to be a reduction in the number of boats and men. In addition there were rumors that the base facility on Chincoteague Island would be reduced in both facilities and personnel, but this latter has not been confirmed. At the Parramore Beach Life boat Station better boats and additional men were to be added, and a Search and Rescue Station was slated for establishment at Cape Charles with "minimum boats and men."

All of this is part of a long-range program to "improve Coast Guard service and reduce the number of lifeboat stations." The expansion at Parramore Beach and the reduction at Assateague and the rumored reduction at Chincoteague is slated over the next three years. No definite time has been set on establishing the Cape Charles facility.

—*Eastern Shore News,* 27 June 1963

Decommissioning Cobb's Island Station

We were responsible for taking apart and removing all of the things that the Coast Guard wanted. It was mostly stuff from inside the station like generators, furniture and machinery. We crated everything up and put the stuff on boats that were bound for Norfolk.

When we were dismantling the station, they (Coast Guard) replaced Station Keeper Bowen with a another guy from somewhere down in North Carolina. I just can't remember his name. . . . Now, Keeper Bowen was a heck of a good man . . . fair, direct and really good with the men . . . but the new guy was just awful, he was a real harsh disciplinarian. Morale was already pretty low because of what we were doing to our own station . . . and he just made it worse by his ways. I really couldn't stand that guy because he made things so much more miserable for the rest of us.[56]

—William Russell, U.S. Coast Guard, Cobb's Island Station
One of the last three crewmen responsible for
decommissioning Cobb's Island Station.

On 4 March 1964 the Cobb's Island Lifeboat Station was ordered disestablished. By orders of the Commandant of the Fifth Coast Guard District, its discontinuation of service was to commence on or about 1 July 1964.[57]

Section III

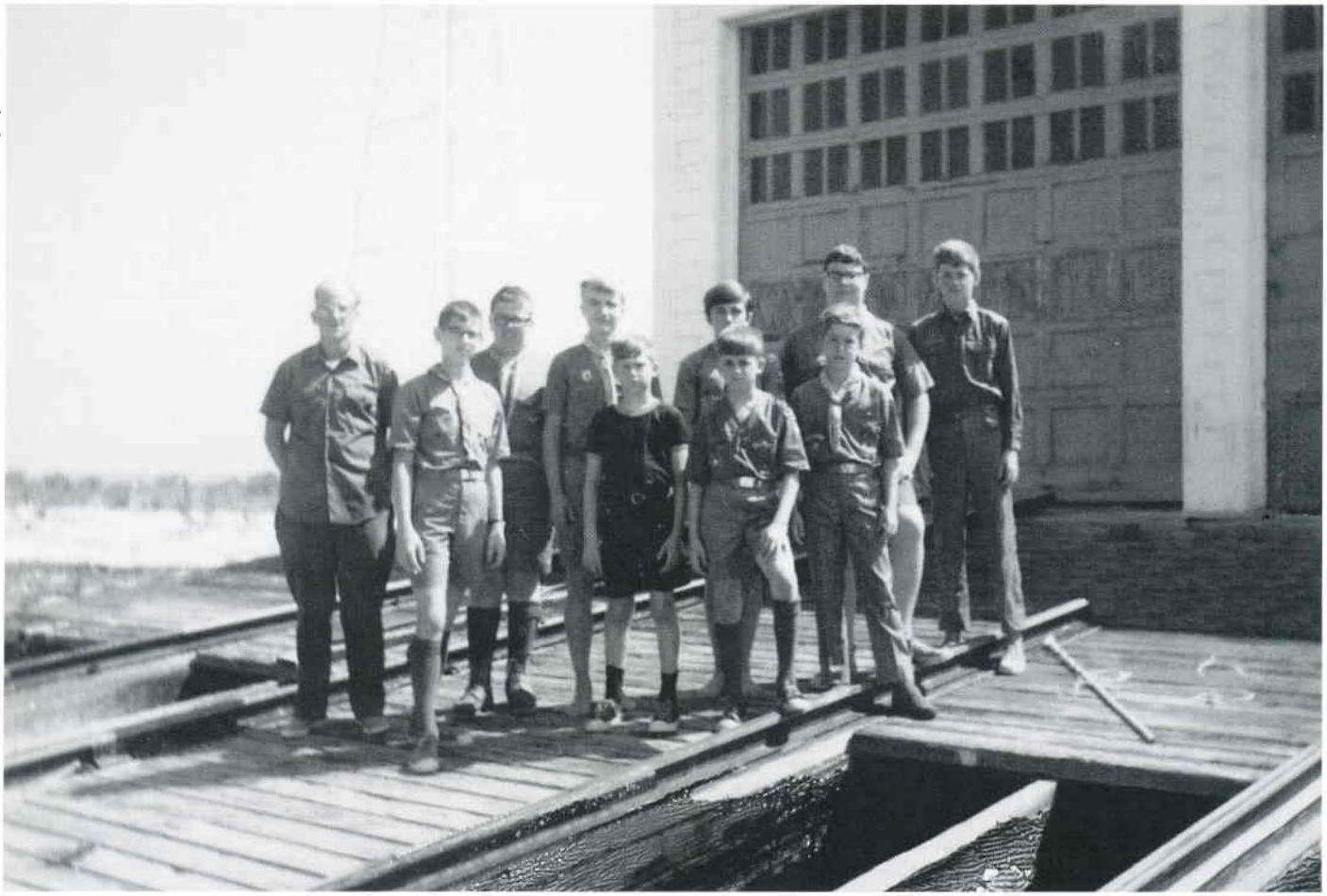
1965–1997: Lean Times

In the early years after its disestablishment, much of the station's industrial-quality hardware, including doorknobs, door hangers, and other similar appurtenances, were removed by vandals. Nearly all building components not permanently secured were confiscated without remorse. Its marine-grade copper guttering and roof flashing were removed and sold locally on the scrap market. Without ability to efficiently shed rainwater, the station suffered significant damage.

Courtesy of United States Coast Guard Archives

This photograph was taken at high tide in the 1960s. The large tank on the dock to the right of the Cobb's Island Station and industrial drums beyond it were for boat fuel. The fuel barge had a yellow tank atop its deck and was used for transporting fuel to the island. Other significant boats included a flat-decked monitor on the left of the wharf and a thirty-six-foot motor lifeboat between the piers.

Courtesy of Mark Goss



Boy Scout Troop 44 from Oxford, Pennsylvania, in front of the Cobb's Island Station Boathouse, June 1970. Left to right: Mr. Robertson, David Zaiss, Mark Goss, Gary Jones, Robert Estes, Ronnie Patrick, Frank Dunlap, Bruce Robertson, Mike Ragan, and Mark Hall. Photo taken by troop leader Mr. Goss.

Beginning in 1969, the station was owned by a private corporation of Tidewater Virginia and Eastern Shore businessmen.[58] The group hoped that with some modest capital investment, the station would one day be fully restored as a hunting lodge. In the interim, the station became a periodic weekend retreat for their families and business associates.

With encouragement by the station's private owners, lucky youth organizations were, on occasion, provided with a opportunity to camp on the barrier islands. One of these groups was Boy Scout Troop 44, hailing from Oxford, Pennsylvania. They came to Cobb's Island Station in June 1970 and caused quite a stir. Within a day of their arrival, the Northampton County Sheriff's Department, FBI, and Virginia Fisheries Commission had all sent representatives to the island in search of the ten-member group and their scoutmasters. Local watermen had seen the group on the island's north end and contacted local authorities, fearing that the group was either stranded or would further vandalize the buildings.[59] Appropriate permission papers were presented to the concerned parties, and the group was allowed to remain for its week-long expedition.

In 1973, Cobb's Island was purchased from its private owners by The Nature Conservancy and incorporated into The Nature Conservancy's Virginia Coast Reserve in 1975. The station, however, remained under its previous owners.

Courtesy of Lee Payne

Courtesy of Lee Payne

These photographs were taken of the Cobb's Island Station in November 1973.

Courtesy of Lee Payne

Courtesy of Lee Payne

In 1978, Cobb Station began hosting one of the noblest ornithological endeavors ever undertaken in the Mid-Atlantic. Peregrine falcons were reintroduced to the Eastern Shore through a joint program of The Nature Conservancy, Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries, Cape Henry Audubon Society, and an array of local birding and wildlife organizations. Dr. Mitchell Byrd, then chairman of the Biology Department of the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, headed the program.[60] Hatchling falcons were brought to the island under supervision of Dr. Byrd's graduate students. The students then spent eight "long" weeks nurturing the birds to maturity using special artificial nesting sites known as "hacking boxes."[61] When mature, the birds were released into the wild as breeding stock for successive generations. Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, the annual summer Peregrine falcon program continued to flourish at the station.

Rick Kellam, Eastern Shore native and formerly of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission–Marine Police, recalls using the station's cupola for stakeouts. It provided shelter and a high vantage point with unsurpassed views. As one of the few significant buildings out on the barrier islands, people plying the coastal waters periodically sought the station as a convenient place of refuge from inclement weather. One day Rick was notified that a person had reportedly landed on the island and was at the station. Rick naturally thought that the person might be in need of aid or medical assistance, so he went to investigate. Upon reaching the station by boat, he found that someone had broken into the building. Inside he found a man warming himself with a fire made from wood scraps torn from the station's siding and interior trimwork.

The guy was in the Boathouse with a substantial fire burning on the (wooden) floor. It was the darnedest thing I ever saw—a big open roaring campfire inside a wooden building. He just wouldn't listen to reason and refused to leave, so, unfortunately, we finally handcuffed him and put out the fire ourselves.[62]

—Rick Kellam, Virginia Marine Resources Commission–Marine Police (retired)

The station's private owners were continually frustrated by unwelcome visitors who persisted in vandalizing the premises. A local watchman was hired to secure and monitor the property, and the owners partially replaced the station's badly damaged roof. Wind-blown sand battered the building exterior, removing layers of protective paint from the wooden siding, leaving raw, exposed wood. The longer the building remained reliant upon a patchwork of repairs, the more difficult it became to envision its survival as a nearly forgotten icon of a past era.

Courtesy of United States Coast Guard Archives

An overview of the Cobb's Island Station and Cobb's Island. The 1936-era station can be seen at the edge of the inlet.

Courtesy of Rick Kellam and Thelma Peterson

This is what remained of the 1880-era Cobb's Island Station in the mid-1990s. The station had been so damaged that one could walk into the second floor from the adjacent ground level.

Courtesy of Rick Kellam and Thelma Peterson

Courtesy of Rick Kellam and Thelma Peterson

Courtesy of Rick Kellam and Thelma Peterson

These photographs show the structural brace and king post that once held the gable end of the station roof.

Section IV

1997–2001: Renewal

Cobb Station was a multifaceted project challenge. Some of the challenges were known and others were being discovered along the way. Not only were we moving a significant building from a remote and isolated island location—we also wanted to rekindle and capture the spirit of the place in its new home. The responsibility of defining a renewed sense of the place was a daunting challenge.

—Richard Ayers, Island Programs director
The Nature Conservancy–Virginia Coast Reserve

Considering an Eco-lodge

We don't just let them loose to find things on their own. That way we can introduce people to the environment without damaging it.[63]

—Richard Schreiber, director, Virginia Eastern Shore Corporation

In the spring of 1997, the Virginia Eastern Shore Corporation began considering development of an eco-lodge facility on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. The eco-lodge was envisioned as a privately owned lodging, dining, and meeting facility. Two groups of patrons were envisioned: "green tourists" and those who might be seeking a "wilderness experience" education-based vacation. The facility would provide a central accommodation and departure point for "managed tourism"-based local activities such as bird watching, naturalist tours, and other educational programs. "Eastern Shore Escapes" guest programs would offer a balance of active recreation and environmental education with activities including bike tours, sea kayaking, bird watching, and specialty boat trips to the Shore's pristine barrier islands.

. . . the hotel/lodge complex will "not be like a motor inn on Route 13. They would look to guests coming and staying in two cycles, Friday through Sunday and Sunday through Friday." Initial plans call for about 40 guests. "It's in keeping with the county's Comprehensive Plan . . . it promotes tourism, it will bring approximately 6 to 12 jobs and an approximate payroll of $200,000 and would generate additional dollars for the county. . . ."[64]

—Virginia Eastern Shore Corporation Testimony
Planning Commission of Northampton County, Virginia, March 1998

A suitable site for an eco-lodge proved difficult to find because much of the land on the Eastern Shore was held in large seaside farmsteads. Urban sites amidst the Eastern Shore's beautiful small towns such as Willis Wharf and Wachapreague were not viable alternatives because they did not provide enough of a naturalist context or a reasonably sized waterfront land parcel. On the north side of Oyster, Virginia, an ideal location was owned by The Nature Conservancy's Virginia Coast Reserve. The site was somewhat remote, afforded excellent views to the seaside, and was accessible from Oyster's public boat harbor. The oblique pear-shaped site included approximately thirty-three acres of upland and was free of any significant buildings. The site was bounded by Oyster's harbor on the south, the Seaside Road on the west, and county-owned property on the north. On a clear day one could look eastward and see Cobb's Island.

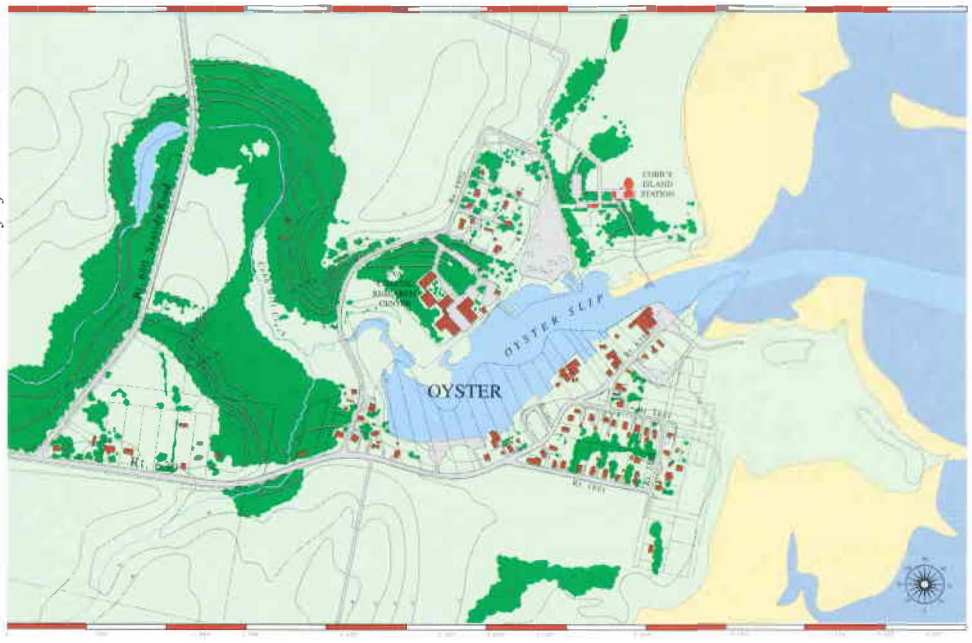
It was like being lost in a big cornfield, except there weren't any rows to follow to get out. . . . It was like a bad dream about bamboo on steroids.

—Design Team representative, site visit comments, fall 1997

The proposed site in Oyster was densely vegetated with a fibrous and tough cattail-like grass known as Fragmities. When representatives of the Virginia Eastern Shore Corporation and The Nature Conservancy visited the site, they found that the ten-foot Fragmities were so thick that they could not see more than about a foot in front of themselves, much less each other. Inside the dense thicket and only able to see the sky, the visitors found the site nearly impossible to navigate.

All ideas no matter how seemingly far-fetched were on the table and open for discussion and review. We had to consider the entire range of ideas with equal fairness.

—Vladimir Gavrilovic, project planner



Courtesy of Vladimir Gavrilovic

Map of Oyster, Virginia.

Selecting a site was only a portion of the puzzle. Would the eco-lodge be a newly constructed building? If a site other than the one proposed in Oyster were considered, might the lodge include a refurbished existing building? Might the Cobb's Island Station be renovated for adaptive reuse in-place on Cobb's Island, and the site in Oyster used as a mainland annex? Another option included relocating the entire Cobb's Island Station from its original home on Cobb's Island to Oyster. Moving the building from the island was not a completely new and unique inspiration. In the early 1980s, Barry Truitt, Virginia Coast Reserve director of science and stewardship, and the station's private owners had proposed moving the building to Oyster. The renovated station was to become the Eastern Shore headquarters for a research-based consortium of Virginia-based colleges and universities that would engage in supporting the mission of The Nature Conservancy through applied research. At the time it was a unique and compelling idea. However, the project was never realized for lack of financial support.[65] Over time the idea continued to resonate as an ongoing "what if?" with the staff of the Virginia Coast Reserve.

The Nature Conservancy and Bushman Dreyfus Architects

The first time we met anyone from The Nature Conservancy, we were busy at the Custis House [in nearby Exmore, Virginia] taking measurements of the building. It was a really hot day and we were both pretty tired and beginning to get cranky. This woman drove up, rolled down her window, and asked us if we wanted any strawberries. . . . We both kind of looked at each other and thought, "Who is this person?" Well, it turned out that woman was Virginia Coast Reserve Assistant Director Lynn Badger. Boy, were we surprised. . . .[66]

—Jeff Bushman, architect, and Jeff Dreyfus, architect,
Bushman Dreyfus Architects

This 1997 photograph shows the Cobb's Island Station as it existed at its original site. Although the building had been originally painted bright white, years of weathering changed its cedar siding to a ghostly silver-gray color.

Courtesy of Bushman Dreyfus Architects

In August 1997, the Charlottesville, Virginia–based architectural firm of Bushman Dreyfus, Inc., was commissioned to assist with the Cobb Station project. The firm was headed by Jeff Bushman and Jeff Dreyfus, two young graduates of the University of Virginia who had met in architecture school and subsequently started their own collaborative practice. They had been previously commissioned by the Virginia Eastern Shore Corporation to provide conceptual design suggestions for another small Eastern Shore project but were not directly acquainted with The Nature Conservancy.

We don't want to leave a sign (on a building) that says "Bushman Dreyfus was here." Pete Rowe used to say that some architects "pee all over things" just to make their mark. We aren't interested in doing that.[67]

—Jeff Bushman

We believe in the clear dialogue of a collaborative process. We listen to the client, and we listen to the building. In design that means what is appropriate. Not what is right or what it has to be. In effect, I hope that we are stewards of each project in which we are involved.[68]

—Jeff Dreyfus

The architects, who would become known as "Jeff and Jeff" or simply "the Jeffs," were not historic preservation zealots—instead they had the sensitivity to work on historic buildings and sites with a contemporary understanding of architecture as a craft.

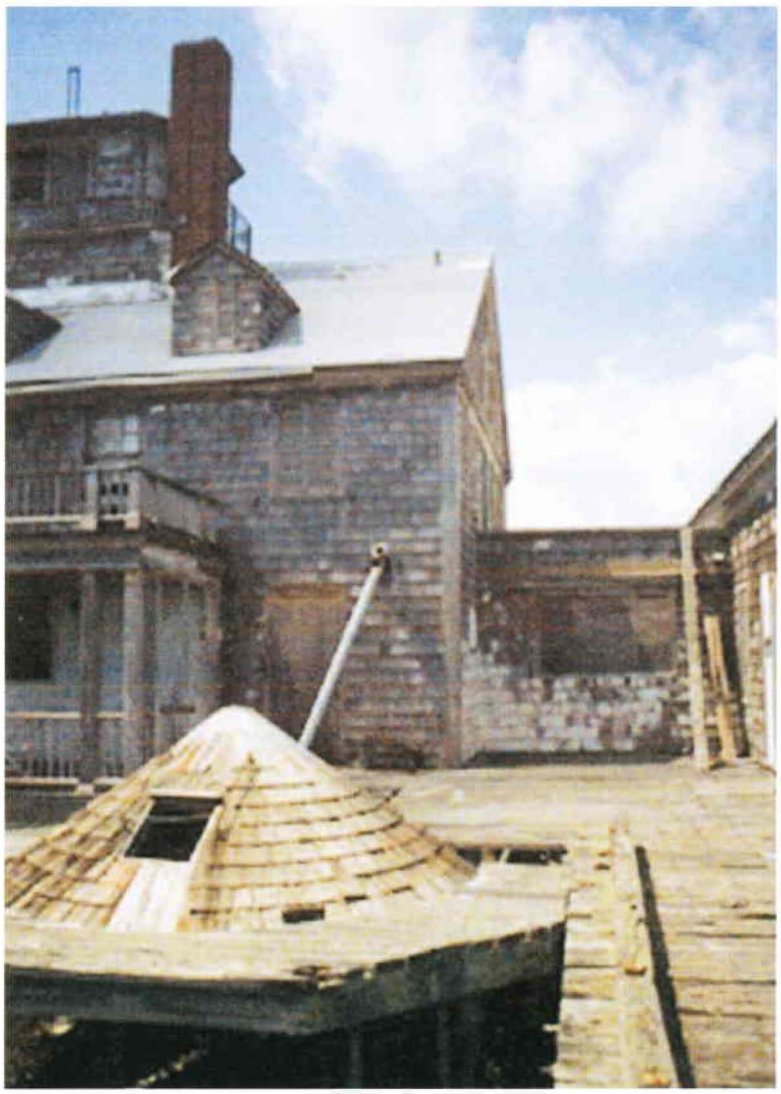
My first impression was that it was a regal, but very sadly abandoned structure.[69]

—Jeff Dreyfus

Courtesy of Bushman Dreyfus Architects

This 1997 photograph shows the front of the Cobb's Island Boathouse with the station's signal tower just beyond.

Courtesy of Bushman Dreyfus Architects



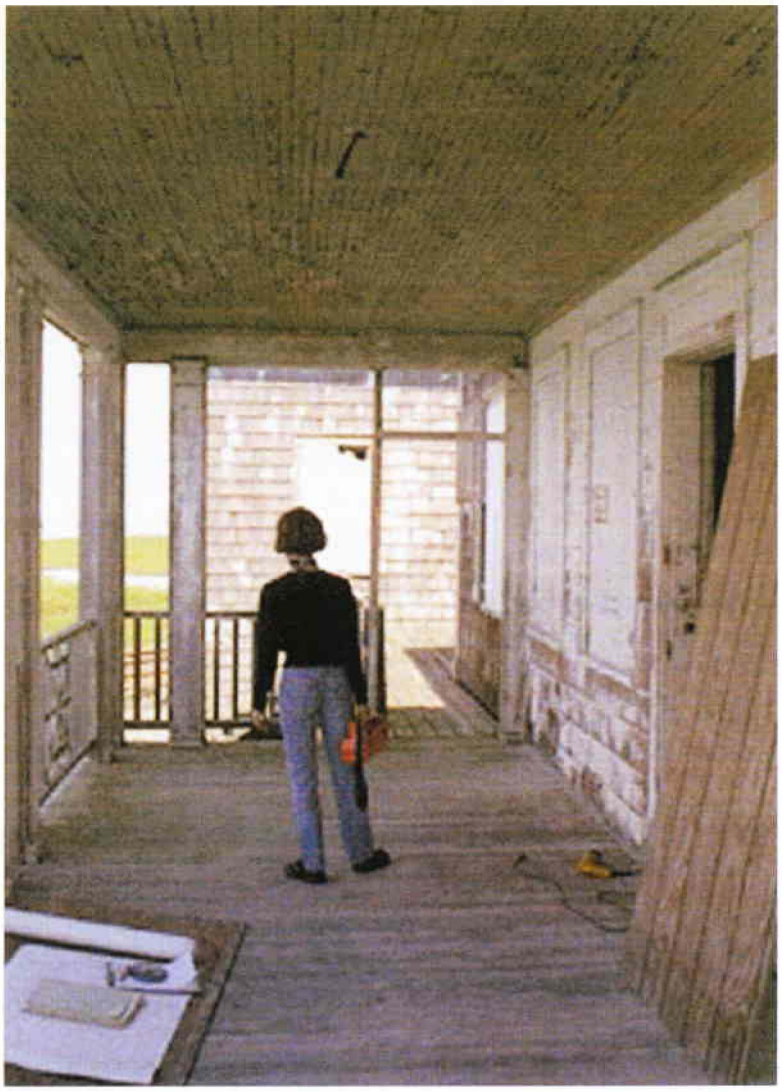
Courtesy of Bushman Dreyfus Architects

When the architects first visited the Cobb's Island site, boats could be used only at high tide when they were moored to the remains of the long wooden dock. Rails for the rescue boat launchway are visible in front of the Boathouse.

This photograph shows the one-story connection between the Main Building (left) and the Boathouse (right). The cone-shaped roof in the foreground is one of the collapsed water cisterns.

When the architects visited the Cobb's Island site, they had to walk carefully on the station's weak interior floors and outside porches. Here one of the architect's staff examines the front porch of the Main Building. In the background are the boarded-up windows of the Boathouse.

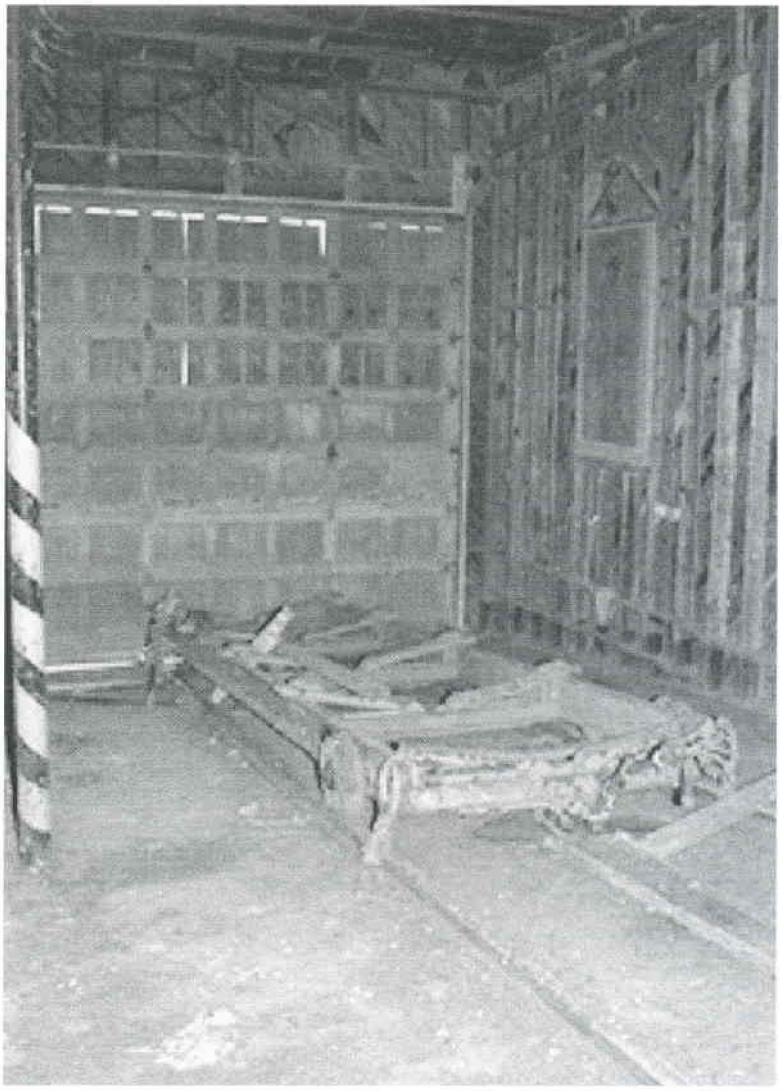
Courtesy of Bushman Dreyfus Architects



This photograph shows the southeast gable end of the Main Building. Although the building was badly worn, the original handrails on each of the porches remained intact.

Courtesy of Bushman Dreyfus Architects

Prior to the move, the Cobb's Island Boathouse interior included the remains of the boat carriage and its delivery rails still resting on the original floor. Daylight could be seen through one of the garage doors, and all of the building's interior paneling had been removed.

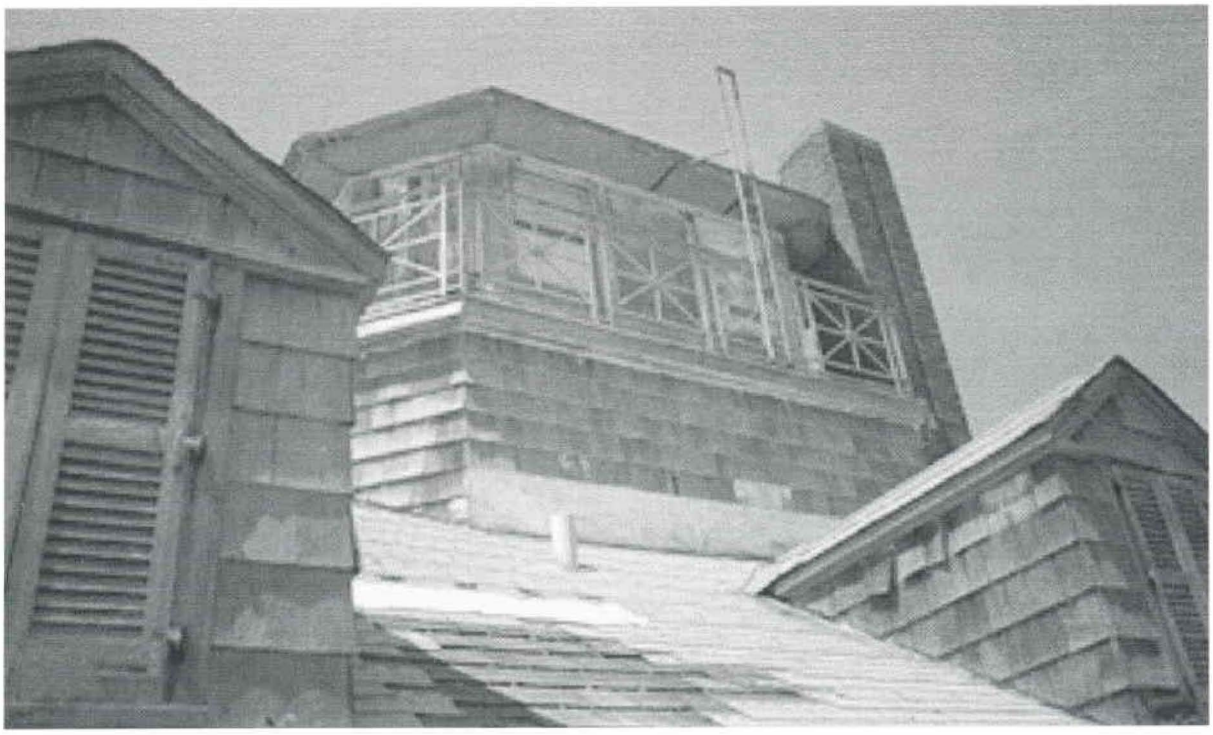


Courtesy of Bushman Dreyfus Architects

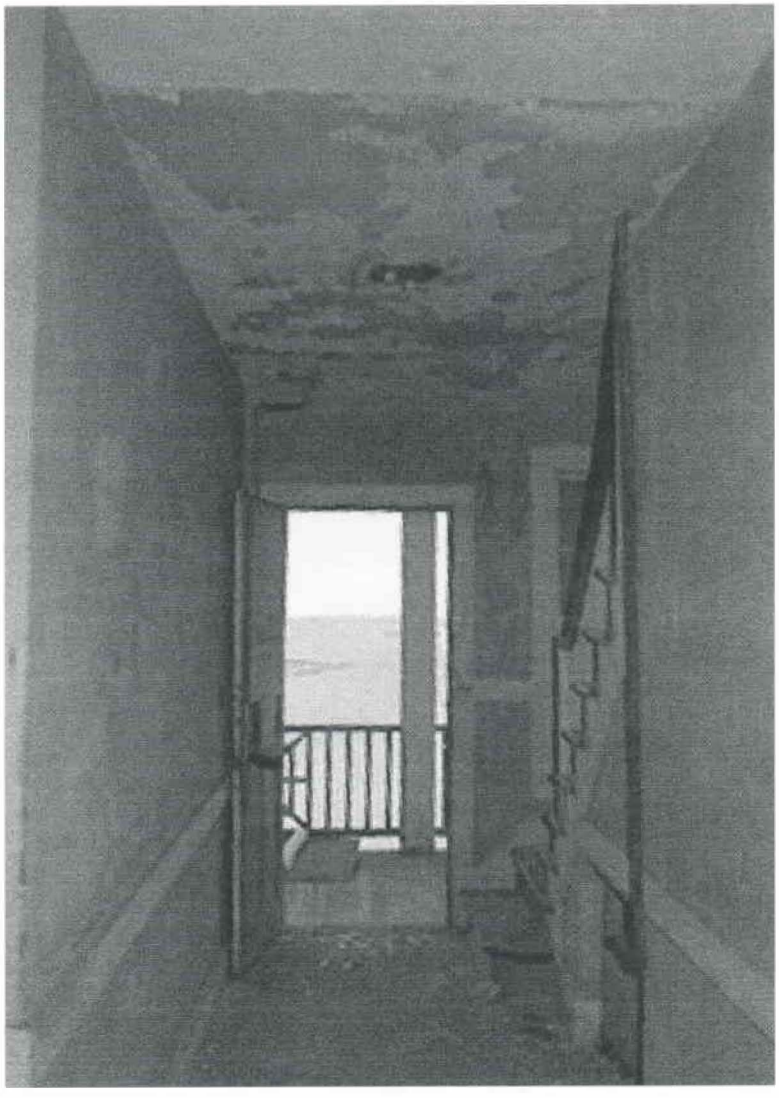
The station's wooden deck was badly deteriorated and could not be salvaged. This photograph shows the remains of one of the water cisterns.

Courtesy of Bushman Dreyfus Architects

Courtesy of Bushman Dreyfus Architects



Courtesy of Bushman Dreyfus Architects

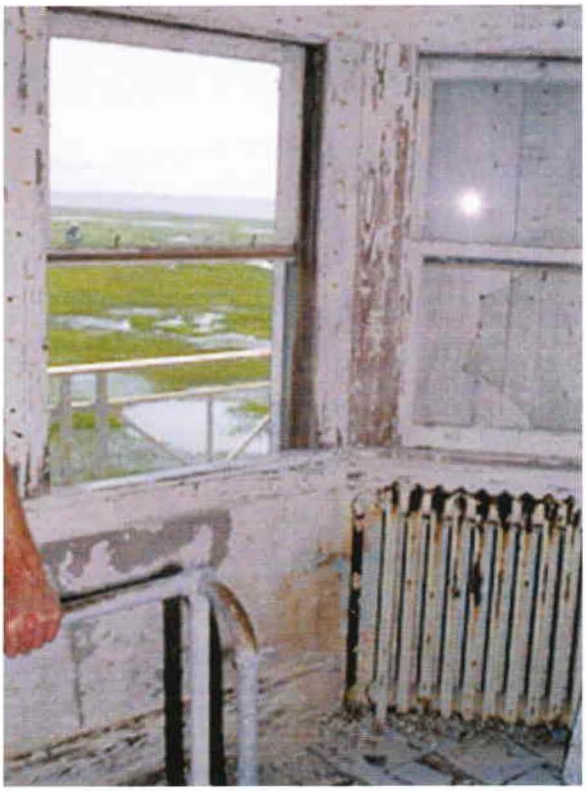


Although the Cobb's Island building had been vandalized, many parts not within easy access remained intact. The cedar-shingle-clad dormers and shutters for the windows were generally weather-worn but undamaged. The chimney to the right of the cupola vented the station's furnace room. It was removed during the building renovation.

This photograph shows water damage in the downstairs hallway with one of the side porches beyond. The main interior stairway is visible on the right.

Courtesy of Bushman Dreyfus Architects

A steel ship's ladder was used to access the cupola from the third floor of the Main Building. The open ceiling hatchway leads to the cupola.



Courtesy of Bushman Dreyfus Architects

From inside the cupola there was an unobstructed view from horizon to horizon. The cupola was heated with floor-mounted radiators like the one on the right.

Courtesy of Bushman Dreyfus Architects

The floor of the cupola was extensively damaged. This photograph, looking downward through the hatchway to the third floor, shows the handrails of the access ladder.

In August 1997, Jeff Dreyfus and the firm's project staff visited the station on Cobb's Island for the first time. They found a building that had suffered from many years of neglect and exposure to the harsh conditions of the barrier islands. The two-story Boathouse contained rescue boats and mechanical equipment. The three-and-one-half-story Main Building, including its cupola, housed crew dormitories, mess hall, and the station keeper's office. A single-story breezeway connected the Boathouse and Main Building. The floors were so deteriorated that the staff feared falling through them. In some places daylight could be seen through the walls directly into the building interior.

The architects performed three important initial tasks. First, the entire exterior and interior of the building was photographed as a visual record of its condition. The photographs provided an important qualitative reference. Second, field measurements were taken as a quantitative record of the building's present state. When compared with what little could be located of the building's original drawings, the dimensions provided the basis for future modifications. Third, a preliminary assessment of the building and the site was performed. The assessment was a means for finding enhancement opportunities, constraints to future renovations, and an initial evaluation of the building's overall architectural integrity.

Moving the Station

If it's not moved now, the life expectancy of the station is minimal. We're saving part of our culture.[70]

—Curtis Badger, local historian and writer

With much regret it was decided that Cobb Station needed to be removed from its original site. The consensus was that if it were not, its fate would match that of similar stations on other barrier islands: destruction by vandals or succumbing to the ocean. The most appropriate course of action was to relocate the building to Oyster, Virginia.

Any scenario in which the station was refurbished in place on the island would cost a minimum of 65 percent more than other development alternatives. The cost escalation was attributed to increased labor costs, insurance, transporting building materials and equipment to the island—all because of the remote location. If the facility remained on the island, there were additional concerns that it would not have dependable access to potable water or utility service. Supporting and maintaining the needs of a tourist lodge, no matter how "eco-friendly" and "basic," differed greatly from sustaining hardy crew contingents of the Life Saving Service or Coast Guard.

We want to make our intentions very clear. . . . We would like to keep Cobb's Island Station as it is right now. We don't want to modify the exterior of the building. . . . All [additional buildings] will be very indigenous buildings to the Eastern Shore.[71]

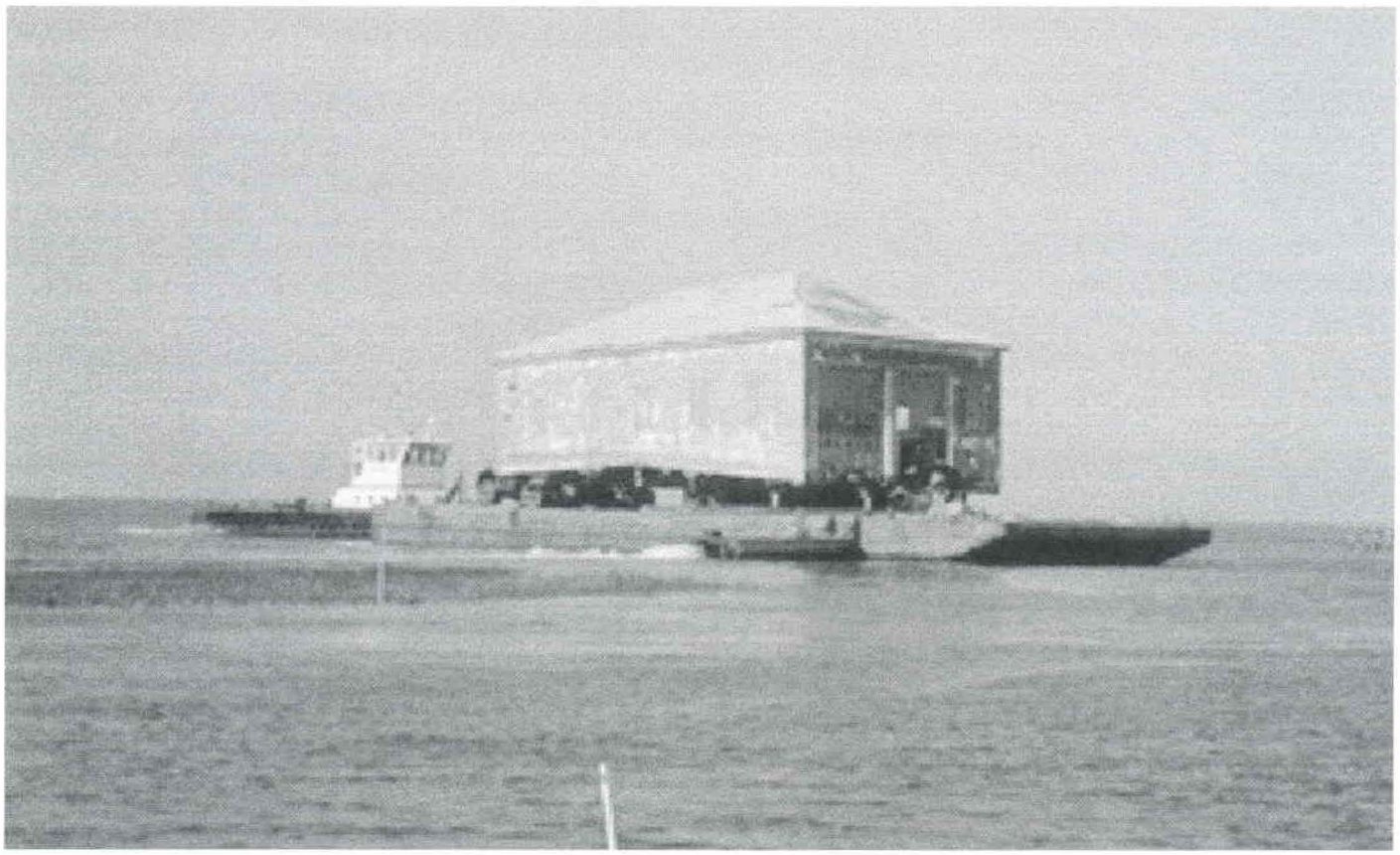
—Jeff Bushman, Northampton County Zoning Commission, March 1998

As the smallest and least architecturally complex of the immediate ensemble, the breezeway connector did not retain the significant stature of the other building components. The breezeway was deemed unsalvageable because of its severely deteriorated condition and was sacrificed for later reconstruction. Plans for moving the building proceeded based on relocating its two major pieces: the Boathouse and the Main Building.

Each piece of the building was to journey from Cobb's Island individually and disembark at the public boat landing in Oyster. Oyster's narrow harbor channel and boat ramp were checked for sufficient depth and space to accommodate a building-laden barge. From the boat landing, both building pieces would make an overland journey of approximately 150 yards to their staging area. Each building piece would then be transferred a short distance to its final site location.

The Virginia Coast Reserve is a special project of The Nature Conservancy that develops high-risk initiatives to advance land conservation practices.

—Vladimir Gavrilovic



On moving day, the Boathouse makes the first voyage from Cobb's Island to Oyster.

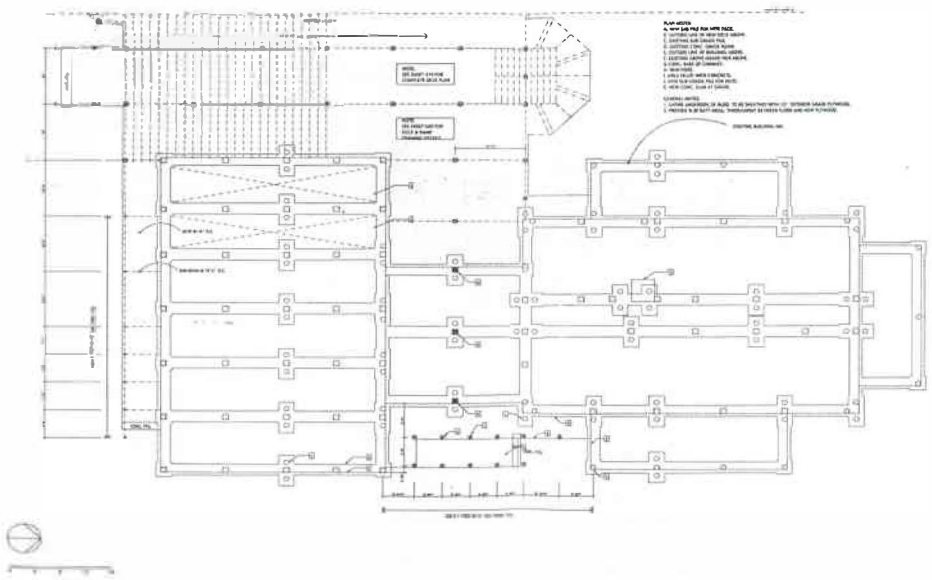
Courtesy of Bushman Dreyfus Architects

Insurance for the moving of the frail buildings was impossible to obtain. The majority of the relocation would be across open water, and moving the buildings was considered an indemnity risk of either complete success or total failure. The risk of calamity for such an ambitious idea was considered to be simply too high. Insuring against their loss far exceeded both their appraised property value and the actual moving cost. The buildings made the move uninsured—if they were lost or damaged beyond repair, newly designed reconstructions would be developed to replace their fallen predecessors.

Courtesy of Bushman Dreyfus Architects

Tractors carefully position the Main Building on the barge in preparation for the moving day voyage from Cobb's Island to Oyster.

At the station's new home, the soil was composed of silt-like sand deposits, dredged over many years from Oyster's harbor and mixed with matted layers of decomposing vegetation—not exactly the best thing in which to anchor a building. To support the station, the architects designed a new unique piling and foundation system. Instead of tying the building to the earth and struggling against the natural tendency of its separate parts to heave and move independently, the architects proposed a system that would allow the entire building to float as a single element on a concrete raft formed by a matrix of grade beams. Movement by any part of the building was amortized across its entire foundation system. The beams were supported by below-grade piles driven deeply into the sandy soil. Above grade, the station rested on pilings set in stirrup-like steel brackets. Little of the unique system would be visible to future station visitors because it was either underground or hidden beneath the completed station. If it did not work, the results would be clearly visible because the buildings would displace themselves under their own weight. Creative Structures Contractors, Inc. of Virginia Beach, Virginia, was commissioned to execute the work in February 1998.



Courtesy of Bushman Dreyfus Architects

This is one of the architectural drawings used for construction of the foundation system that secured the station at its new home.

John C. Sawhill, then chief executive officer of The Nature Conservancy, was interviewed on National Public Radio's "Living on Earth" program in February 1998. He eloquently described the work of the Virginia Coast Reserve as the cutting edge of the entirety of the organization. The Cobb's Island Station project was cited as the "new direction" for The Nature Conservancy's national and international community-based, conservation-based programs.

In January 1998, Expert Construction and House Movers of Virginia Beach, Virginia, was contracted to move the station from Cobb's Island to the mainland. The firm's stellar credentials included the relocation of the Block Island Lighthouse in Rhode Island. The same company would later move the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse in North Carolina using many of the lessons gleaned from their adventures on the Eastern Shore. The building was disconnected from its existing pilings with hydraulic jacks and positioned on special support pallets and wheeled dollies.

The footing and concrete foundation system at a corner of the completed Main Building.

Courtesy of Steven Small

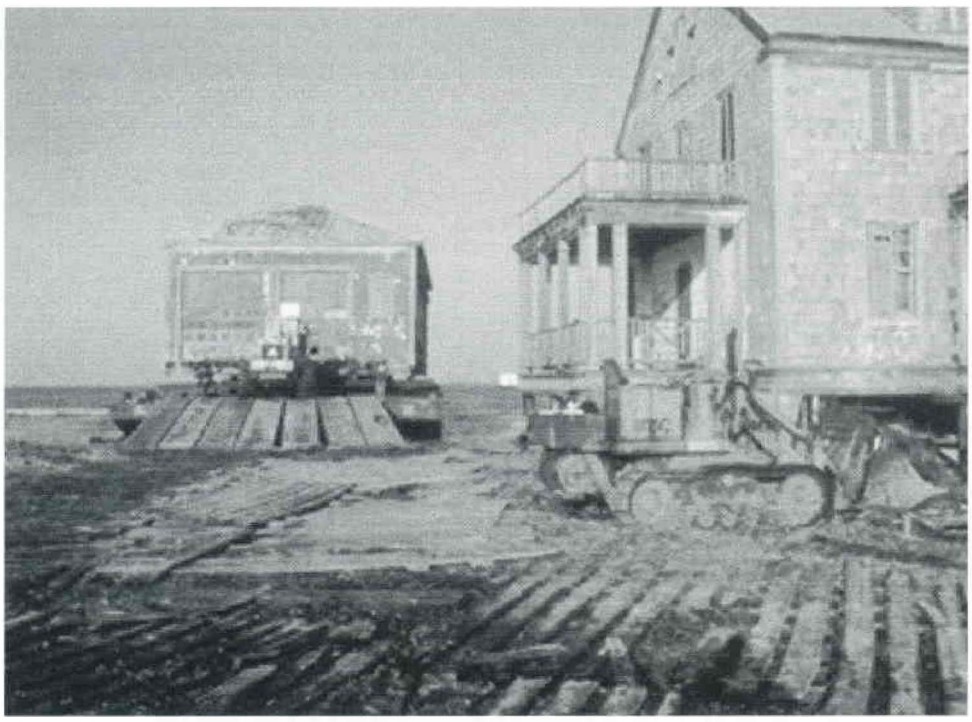
A temporary roadbed of steel plates supported by large pieces of lumber was constructed on the soft sand and spongy marsh of the island. Each of the two building pieces was to be rolled across the marsh on dollies and placed atop the *Bunny C.*—a large flat-decked transport barge that would then deliver the pieces to Oyster. The voyage would cover ten water miles across Cobb Bay and Mockhorn Bay prior to arriving in Oyster Harbor. With good weather, calm seas, and favorable tides, the journey was estimated to take approximately four hours.

On 30 April, the Boathouse, which was thirty-six feet wide and fifty-six feet long, successfully made the combined dolly and barge trip to Oyster. Because the Boathouse was smaller and the least architecturally complex of the two major building pieces, its journey was considered a dry run for moving the larger Main Building. If a calamity had occurred, the potential loss of the Boathouse was of lesser consequence than loss of the architectural presence of the Main Building.

This island has been a challenge, that's all I have to say. . . . All my experience is worth nothing on these marshes.[72]

—Jim Matyiko, co-owner, Expert Construction and House Movers

The first of May was a miserable, foggy day accompanied by rain and choppy seas. The station's 210-ton Main Building, 88 feet long by 56 feet wide, was to move from Cobb's Island to the mainland. Before the building left the island, one of the supporting dolly wheels got stuck in the island marsh. The dolly tilted toward the lodged wheel, destabilizing the steel support beams in the middle of the building. The entire building began to slide and teeter perilously. The contracting crew scattered for safety.



Courtesy of Bushman Dreyfus Architects

On moving day, the Boathouse was placed on the barge and readied for transport. The roadbed in the foreground was constructed of wooden planks and steel plates laid across the marsh.

The only thing holding it up is the tires.[73] *That's never happened before, . . . There just isn't any bottom to that island. None. We had a tractor sink in the same hole the house came out of. I'll have a good feeling when this job is done.*[74]

—John Matyiko, co-owner, Expert Construction and House Movers

The *Bunny C.* was slightly undersized, and the building's porches made the move to Oyster completely cantilevered over the water. One newspaper reporter on the scene likened maneuvering the Main Building–laden barge in Oyster's small boat harbor to "driving a 1965 Cadillac through the narrow nineteenth-century streets of Georgetown in Washington, D.C."[75]

The Main Building en route from Cobb's Island to Oyster.

Courtesy of Curtis Badger

Construction of the specially designed foundation system was completed in September 1998, and the Main Building and Boathouse were moved to their final positions. Remedial work was performed to check for damage incurred during the move and to eliminate any further weather-related interior damage. Architecture and engineering documents were fully completed in February 1999. General contracting bids for the entire renovation of the station were to be received by The Nature Conservancy through mid-April 1999.

Courtesy of Curtis Badger

The Main Building aboard the barge Bunny C. *departs from Cobb's Island.*

Courtesy of Curtis Badger

An audience of curious spectators was on hand when the Main Building arrived at Oyster.

Courtesy of Curtis Badger

The Main Building arrives at the public boat ramp in Oyster.

Courtesy of Curtis Badger

The Main Building in Oyster on moving day.

Courtesy of Curtis Badger

Courtesy of Bushman Dreyfus Architects

This is the Main Building after it was placed on the new foundation system in Oyster.

This is the Boathouse at its new home in Oyster. The pallets beneath the Boathouse floor kept it supported and level during the move. The building had not yet been attached to its new foundation system.

Fire Changes the Parameters of Eastern Shore Programs

The fire was a tragedy in that it destroyed an Eastern Shore landmark . . . But with the building gone, we need to explore our options for a future facility. In the coming weeks we will discuss what we need an island facility to accomplish. Should we be able to accommodate overnight guests, or do we need a day-use-only facility? The facility will be a part of a long-term nature tourism and education program, so we will evaluate what we do on Parramore within the context of the broader program.[76]

—John M. Hall, director of The Nature Conservancy's Virginia Coast Reserve

On 3–4 April 1999, the Parramore Island Coast Guard Station was struck by lightning. The ensuing fire destroyed two-thirds of the facility and was so intense that it was reported by residents ten water miles away in the seaside town of Wachapreague, Virginia. Parramore Station was another facility of The Nature Conservancy and a sister of the 1936-era Cobb's Island Station. Parramore, however, had been extensively remodeled in the early 1990s, had remained in active Coast Guard service until 1994, and was conveyed to The Nature Conservancy with intact modern upgrades.

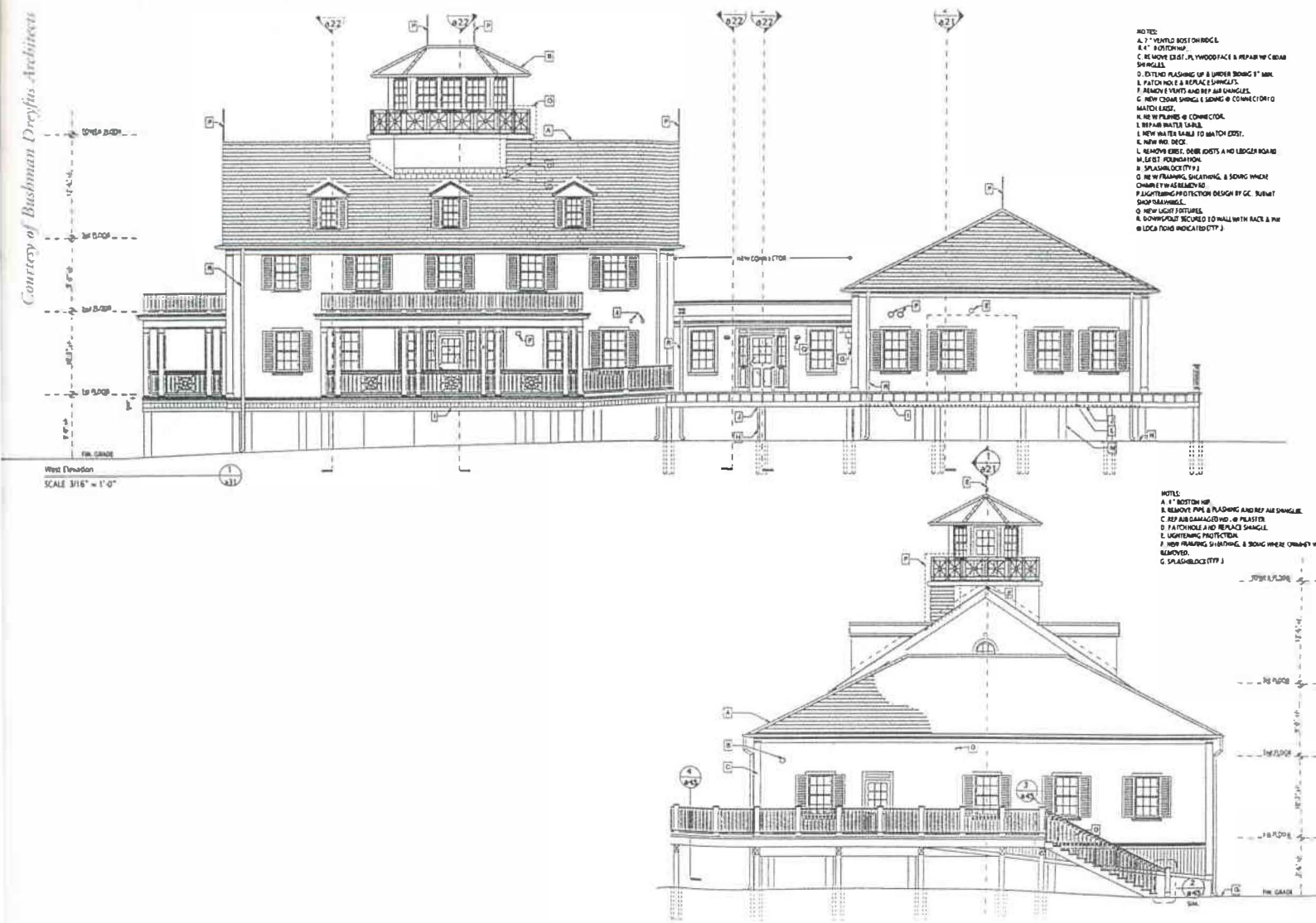
On 3 April I had a project and an approved plan for our Parramore facility. Nevertheless, I also had a number of logistical questions about managing a facility on a barrier island and a similar one in Oyster without significant program use differences. Renovation of only Cobb Station allowed us to use the facility as we were intending to use Parramore Station before the fire, but without duplication of efforts. The inherent difference was that by placing Cobb Station in Oyster—on the mainland—we eliminated the extensive resources necessary for building and managing a facility on a barrier island.

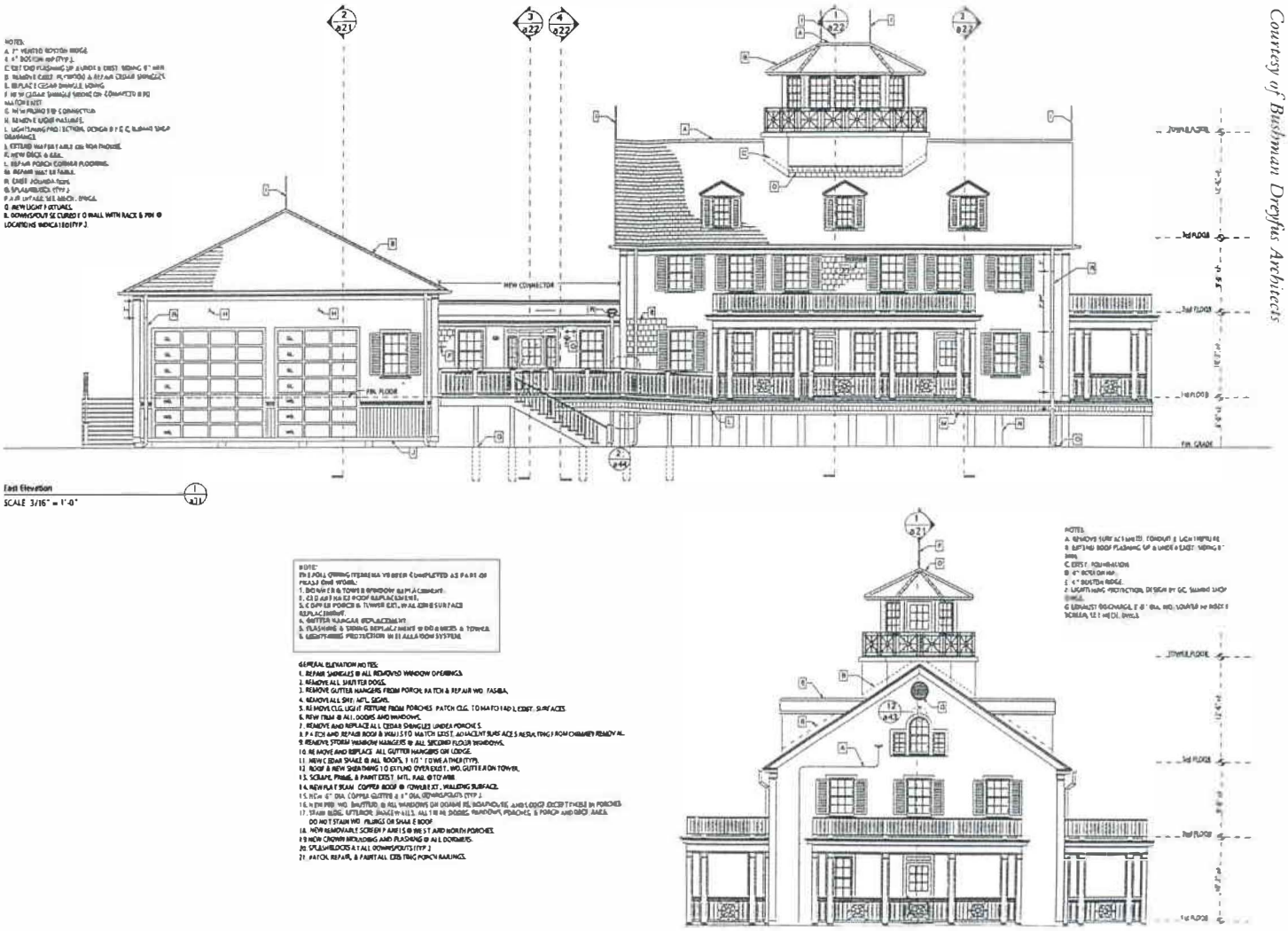
— Richard Ayers

The Parramore fire forced The Nature Conservancy to reconsider the parameters for all of its Eastern Shore programs. Work on the Cobb Station was temporarily halted. The Virginia Eastern Shore Corporation and The Nature Conservancy also re-evaluated their own working relationship. It was jointly decided that Cobb Station would become a community and public building of The Nature Conservancy. It would take on a newly defined role as the "gateway to the Virginia Coast Reserve." By redefining the project, important transformations in the planning and architectural design approach to Cobb Station were introduced. Some portions of the project were completely eliminated and others more sharply refined. Design modifications were based principally upon a significant reduction in overnight capacity and the need for the facility to accommodate a variety of community groups and functions.

Portions of the building that would, in all probability, not be affected by the pending redesign were given priority work status. A new roof and structural bracing were provided for parts of the Boathouse, with special attention given to the support columns surrounding the boat bay doors. On the Main Building, replacement of the roof and dormer windows began in June 1999. Because of the ten-month hiatus and slow pace of construction, rumors began to spread in the community. Some said the building had been simply abandoned in place, others speculated that it was destined to become a bed and breakfast, and others said that the building had been discovered to be haunted. In March 2000 the Armada/Hoffler Construction Company, Inc., of Virginia Beach, Virginia, was commissioned as general contractor for the renovation of the station. A battery of local subcontractors turned the site into a bustle of activity and construction materials. The project became a great public curiosity as the once floating buildings began their transformation from vestiges of a lost place to definers of a new one.

This is one of the architectural drawings used for renovation of the west and south elevations of the Main Building and Boathouse.





This is one of the architectural drawings used for renovation of the east and north elevations of the Main Building and Boathouse.

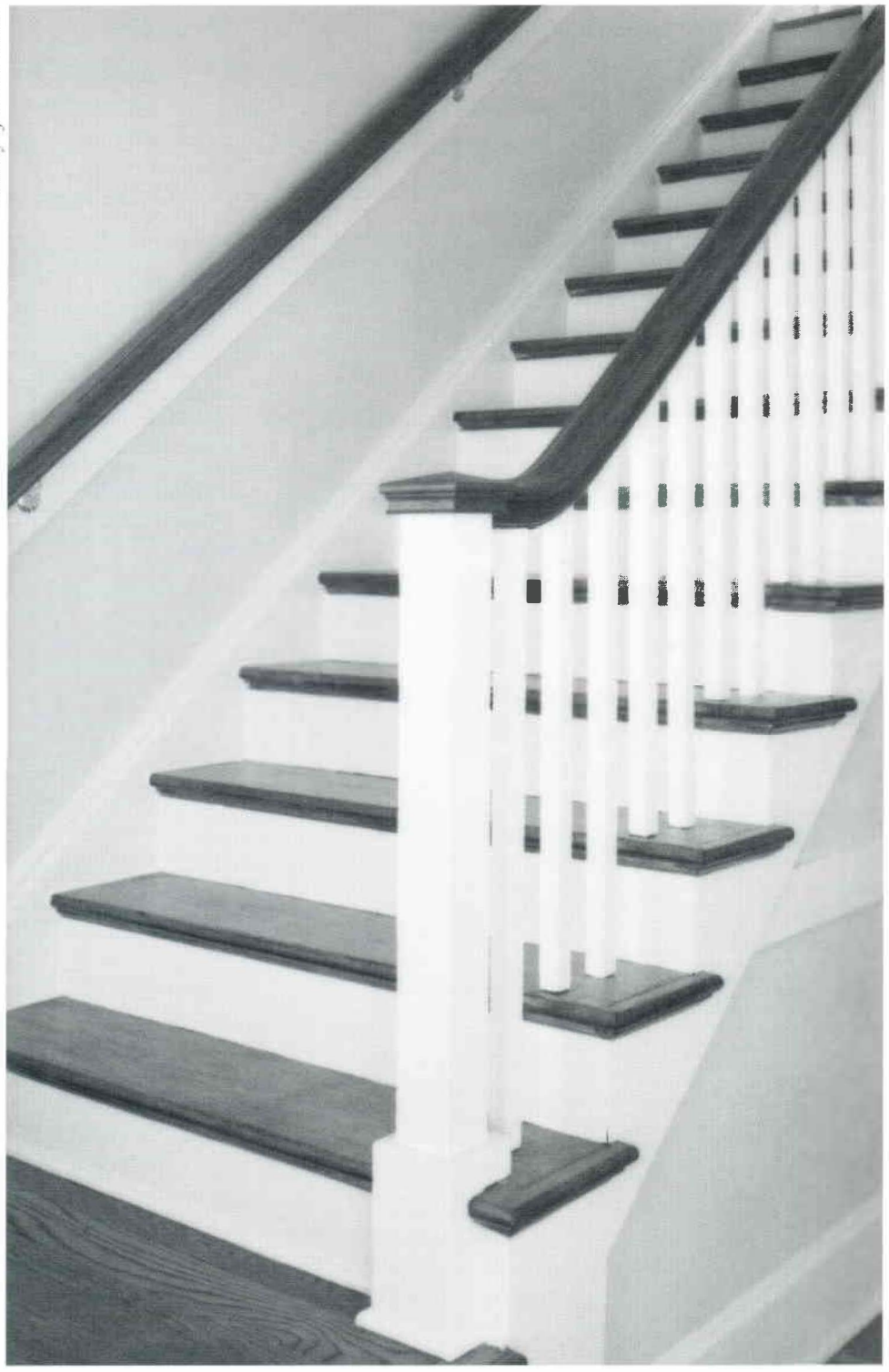
Construction access to the station remained from the harbor at Oyster. Once renovations were complete, the entrance was to be modified to originate from Route 600, the Seaside Road. In September 2000 Richard Ayers and two members of the design team spent an afternoon laying out the entrance road through an existing soybean field. This important task was undertaken using only a quiver of survey flags and a field compass for reference. The roadway was aligned to honor a family cemetery located on the property, existing topography, and the sequence of views across the landscape to Cobb Bay. While they walked back to their car in the dark, one of them commented that "the station's entrance had been located this time not across water but across land."

. . . remember the courage of the men that ran these stairs every day and every night.
—Richard Ayers

The main interior stair and its handrails were retained as artifacts of a previous era. They were generally stable and contributed to the station's integrity as one of its most important surviving architectural elements.

Courtesy of Bushman Dreyfus Architects

Courtesy of Steven Small



Renovated main interior stair.

Bi-weekly project meetings were held throughout the station's construction. Progress, delays, problems, variations from drawings and specifications, and on-site modifications were discussed, debated, and remedied. The process was not without some minor surprises. When interior wall paneling and plaster and floorboards were removed, previously unexposed wood weakened by years of moisture damage was found. In other circumstances, unexpected dimensional changes to the interior structure were discovered.

. . . Hey. Umm, does that look right to you?[77]

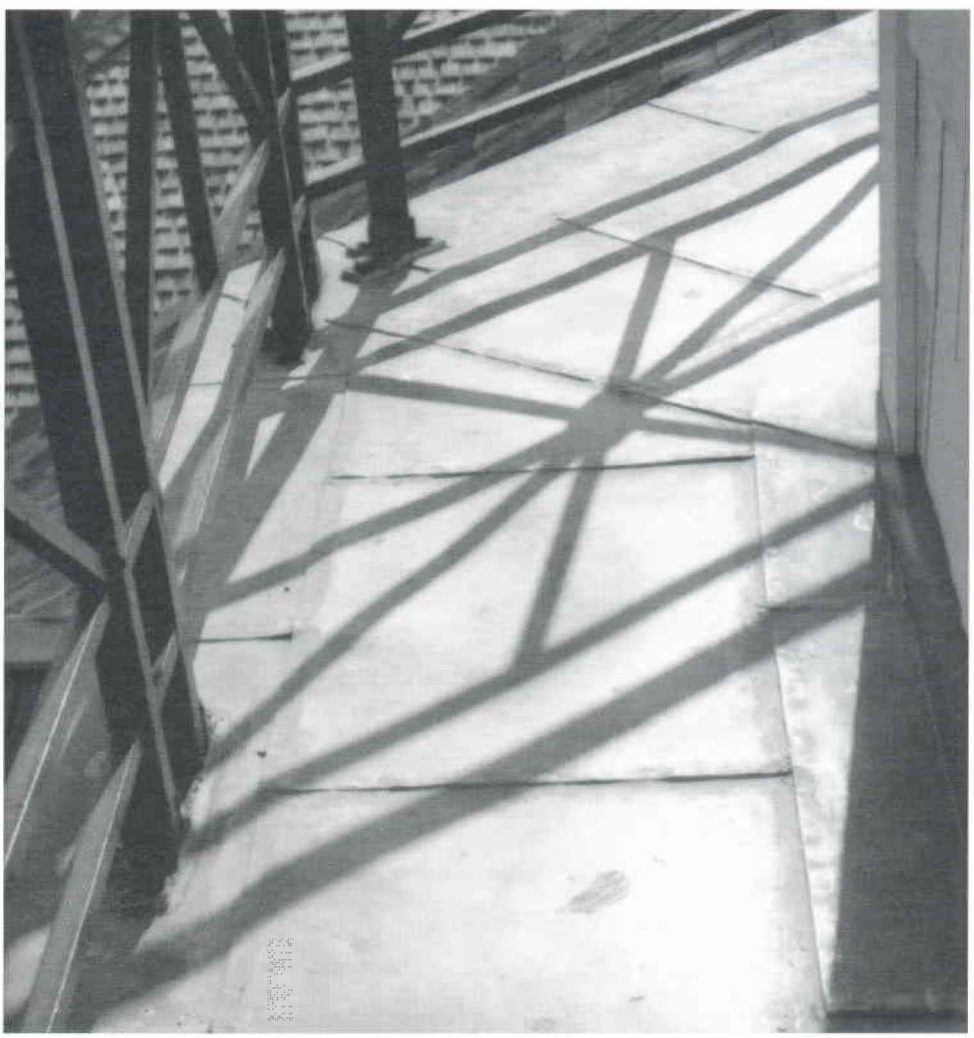
—Richard Ayers

Something was not right, but we couldn't quite figure it out.[78]

—Jeff Dreyfus

After one of the daylong project construction meetings, architect Jeff Dreyfus and Richard Ayers were standing atop the station in its cupola surveying the project site. As both reflected upon the day's discussion and events, Richard commented that something seemed odd about the station's new Pump House. On the ground a few minutes later, they reviewed the architectural drawings and discovered that the roof of the Pump House had been installed incorrectly. As designed, the gable ends were to face north-south to match the adjacent garage and storage building. As constructed, the gable ends were facing east-west, or ninety degrees in the wrong direction. The situation was brought to the attention of Armada/Hoffler's superintendent, Bruce Hendrick, who could not help but laugh out loud—but ensured that the rueful carpenters would remedy the problem.

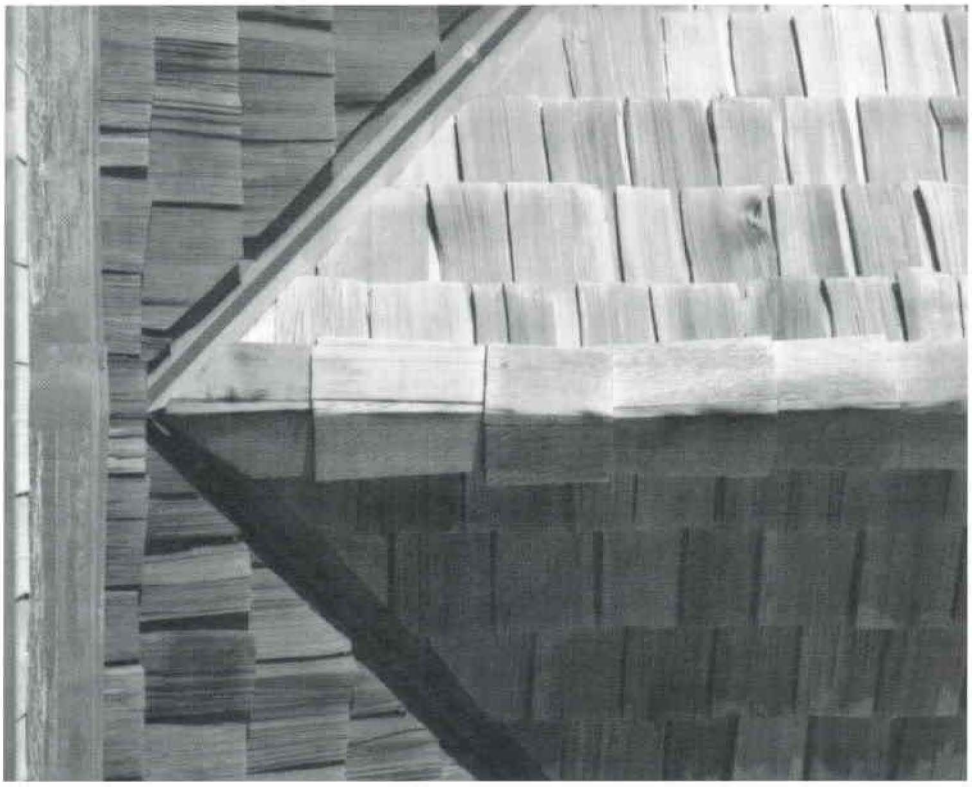
The renovated cupola's exterior handrails and seamed-copper catwalk.



Courtesy of Steven Small

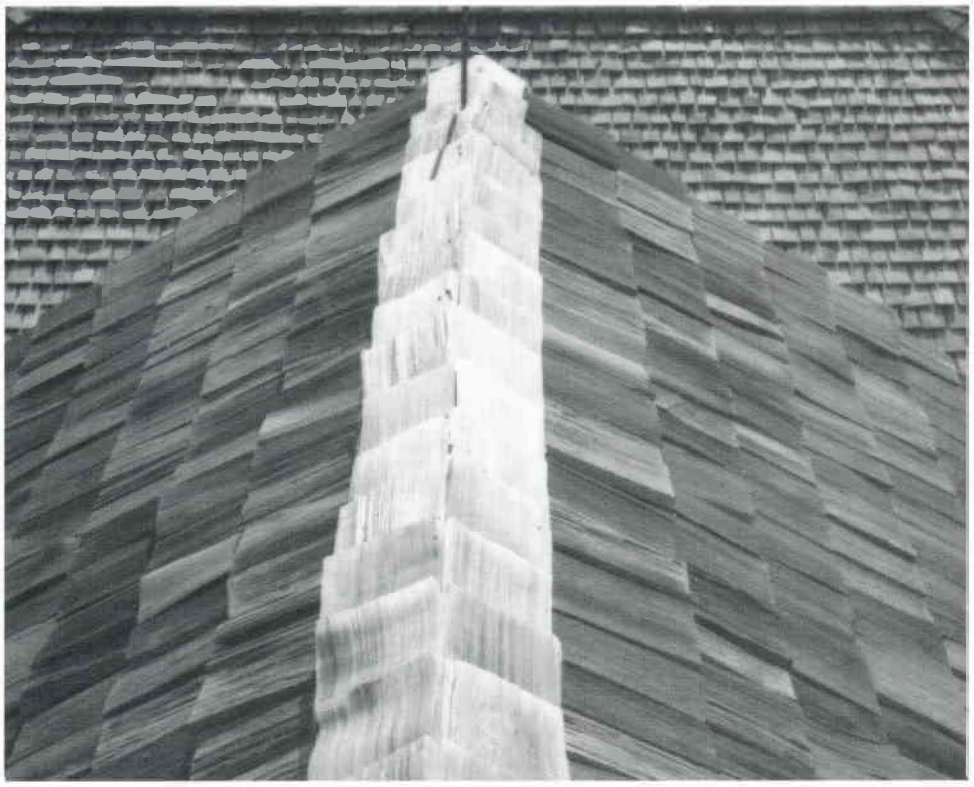
Other construction project anomalies occurred. Though mostly minor, field changes and modifications were a part of the process. One day workers were asked to remove a portion of the newly laid cedar shake shingle roof from the Stationkeeper's Cottage after it was discovered that cedar building siding was being mistakenly used for cedar roofing shingles.

Courtesy of Steven Small



Copper flashing for the roof dormers of the completed Main Building in Oyster.

Courtesy of Steven Small



This photograph shows the cedar-shingle roof-peak plates on the completed Main Building.

Is it me, or are the windows different—sort of random colors? . . . Maybe it's just the angle of the sun on the building.[79]

—Richard Ayers

On another day, Jeff Dreyfus arrived at the project site and found Richard Ayers standing in the field just east of the Boathouse. Something seemed slightly amiss. With his head cocked and arms folded across his chest, Richard was squinting at the two walls of small windows that were to replace the former doors of the Boathouse. After reviewing the drawings and specifications, they discovered that two different tints of window glass were required for the Boathouse. The two glass types had been installed in an indiscriminate, almost checkerboard pattern. Superintendent Bruce Hendrick ensured that the approprite corrections would be quickly accomplished.[80]

The northeast elevation of the completed Main Building in Oyster.

Courtesy of Steven Small

We were making a comfortable modern facility in a building that had no original fat in it.[81]

—Jeff Dreyfus

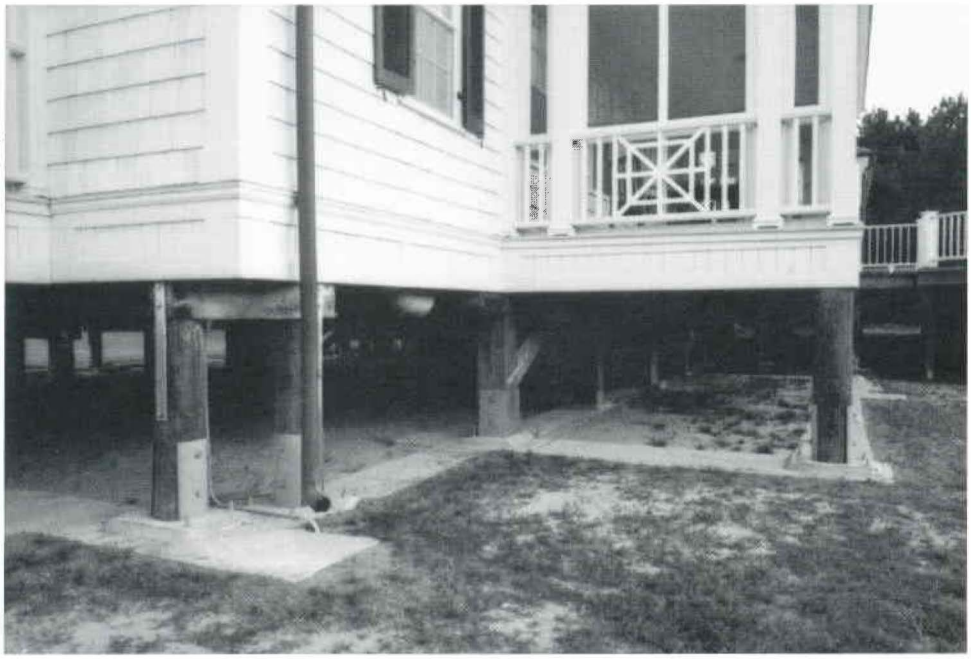
The complexity of installing the state-of-the-art mechanical system, including electrical, heating/air conditioning, plumbing, and fire suppression, was a key factor in the station's construction. Placing modern systems into the sixty-five-year-old interior determined the cadence of construction and drove the scheduling of all other building trades involved in the project. This was especially ironic when compared with the 1936-era station's minimal electrical system, primitive plumbing methods, and nonexistent air-conditioning/heating system. Enormous heating and

air-conditioning ducts, complex electrical/fiber optic cabling relays, sanitary sewer and potable water lines all had to be installed in places where they did not formerly exist. Kitchen vents and exhaust handlers were located so that they did not conflict with interior rooms and were placed in the least visible and downwind locations. Locating the vents was only a portion of the problem—finding an accessible route through the maze of structural framing and other utilities that did not compromise the integrity of the buildings was yet another.

We actually had to lower the ceiling in the main hallway by a full eighteen inches to accommodate some of the ductwork and its sound insulation.[82]

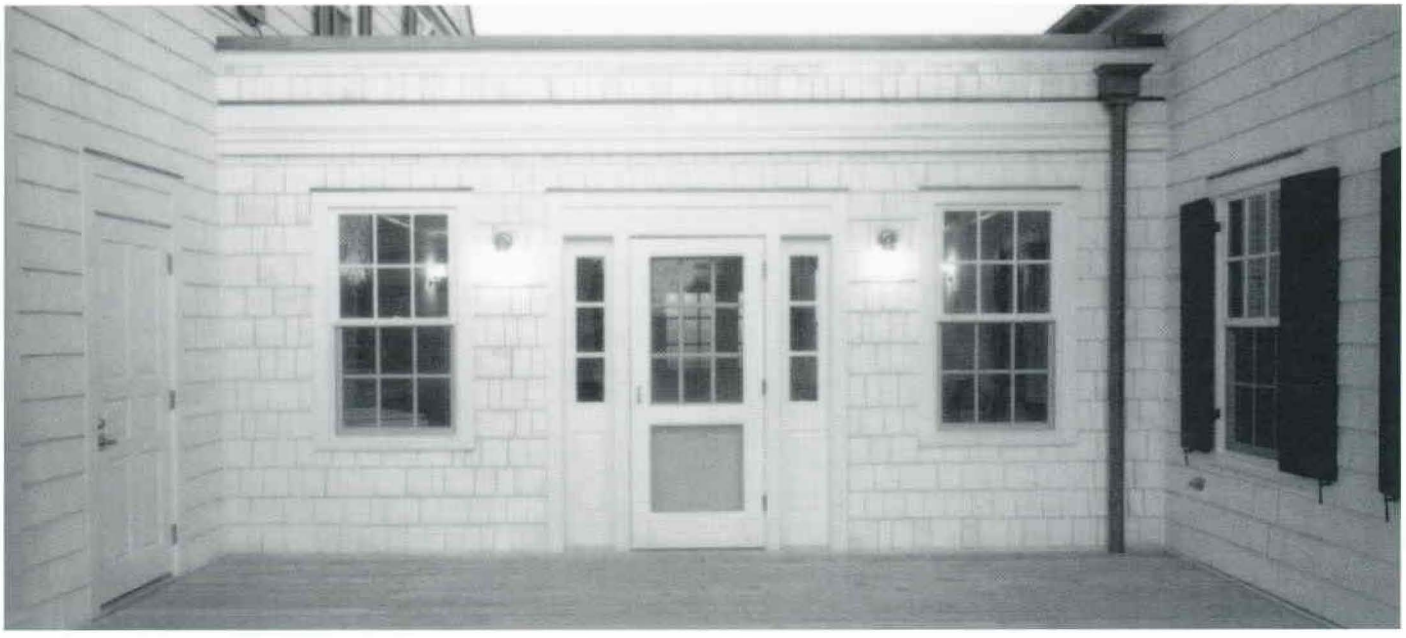
—Jeff Dreyfus

Courtesy of Steven Small

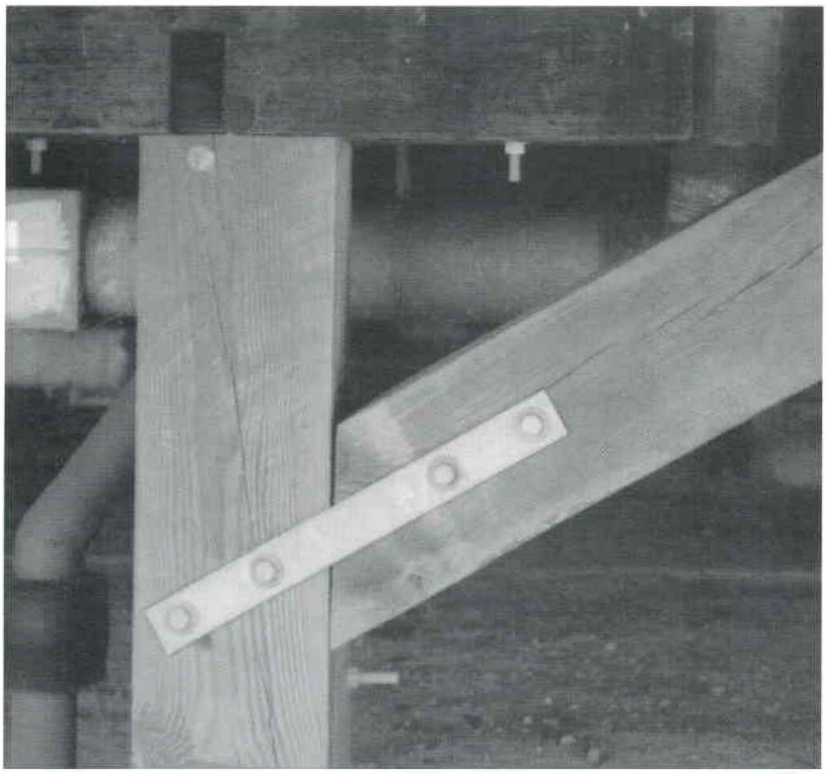


The concrete foundation, piling, attachment stirrup, and downspout at a corner of the completed Main Building.

Courtesy of Steven Small



The west elevation of the connector between the completed Main Building and Boathouse.



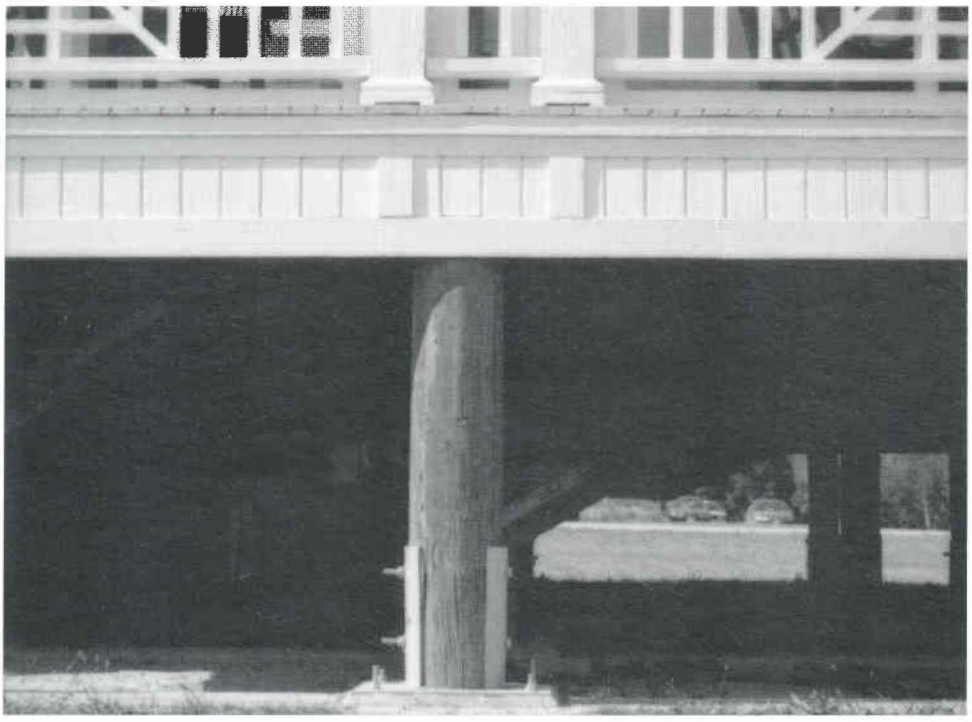
Courtesy of Steven Small

A bolt plate connection for one of the diagonal braces of the support pilings for the completed Main Building.

The Main Building was equipped with a commercial kitchen and dining facility on its first floor with seven guest rooms on the two upper levels. The cupola was fully restored, including its original exterior handrail and copper-clad exterior catwalk. The previous steeply inclined standing ship-type ladder was replaced with a spiral stair, enabling greater access to the tower. Each of the porches of the Main Building retained their original handrails, and the original floorboards were supplemented with matching tongue-and-groove boards. Copper screens were added to all of the porch openings. The Boathouse was retained as a great indoor room. The floors of the Boathouse that once sloped sharply to accommodate boat carriages were leveled, and the resulting space was developed to provide a flexible public meeting room with a capacity of more than one hundred persons. The connector between the Main Building and Boathouse was replaced with new construction that respected its original scale, proportion, and architectural character. The new connector was designed to become the main public entrance dividing the public meeting spaces of the Boathouse and the more intimate Main Building residential and dining functions.

The completed Boatroom interior with its original center post and main beam.

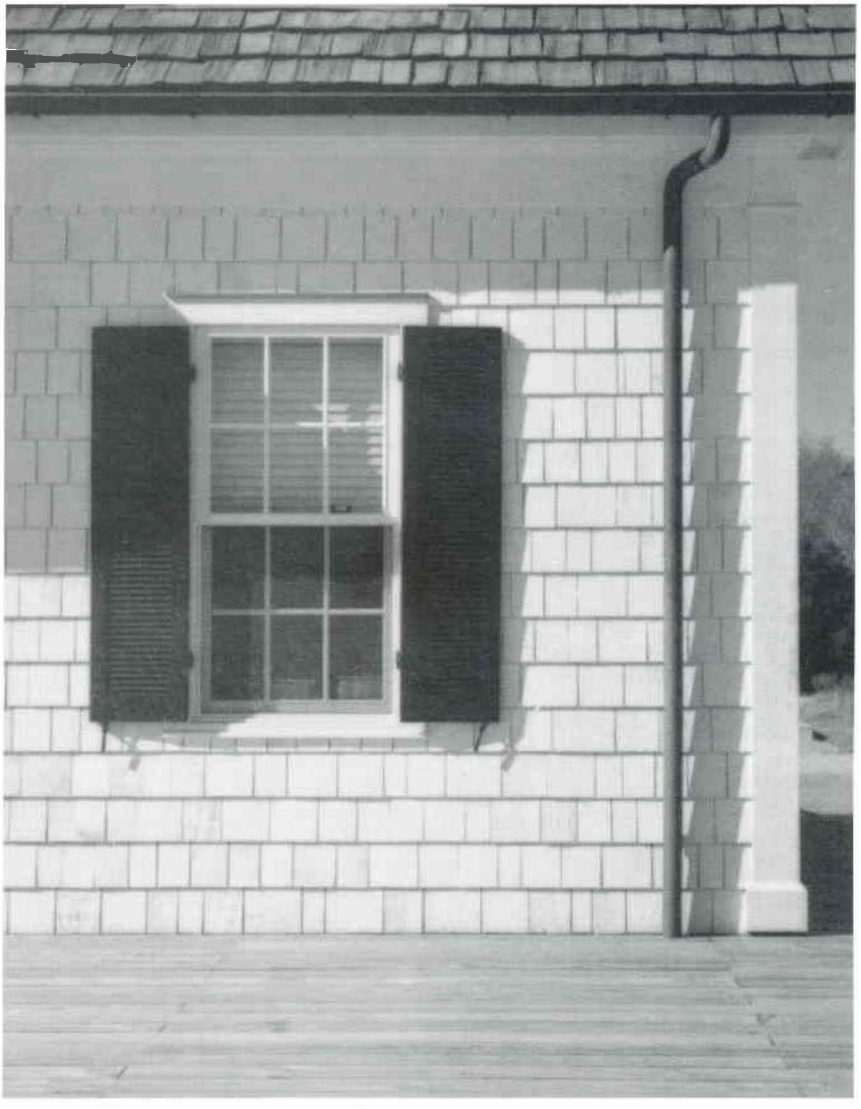
Courtesy of Steven Small



Courtesy of Steven Small

The piling stirrup and escutcheon plate of the porch on the completed Main Building in Oyster.

A detail elevation of the completed Keeper's Cottage.

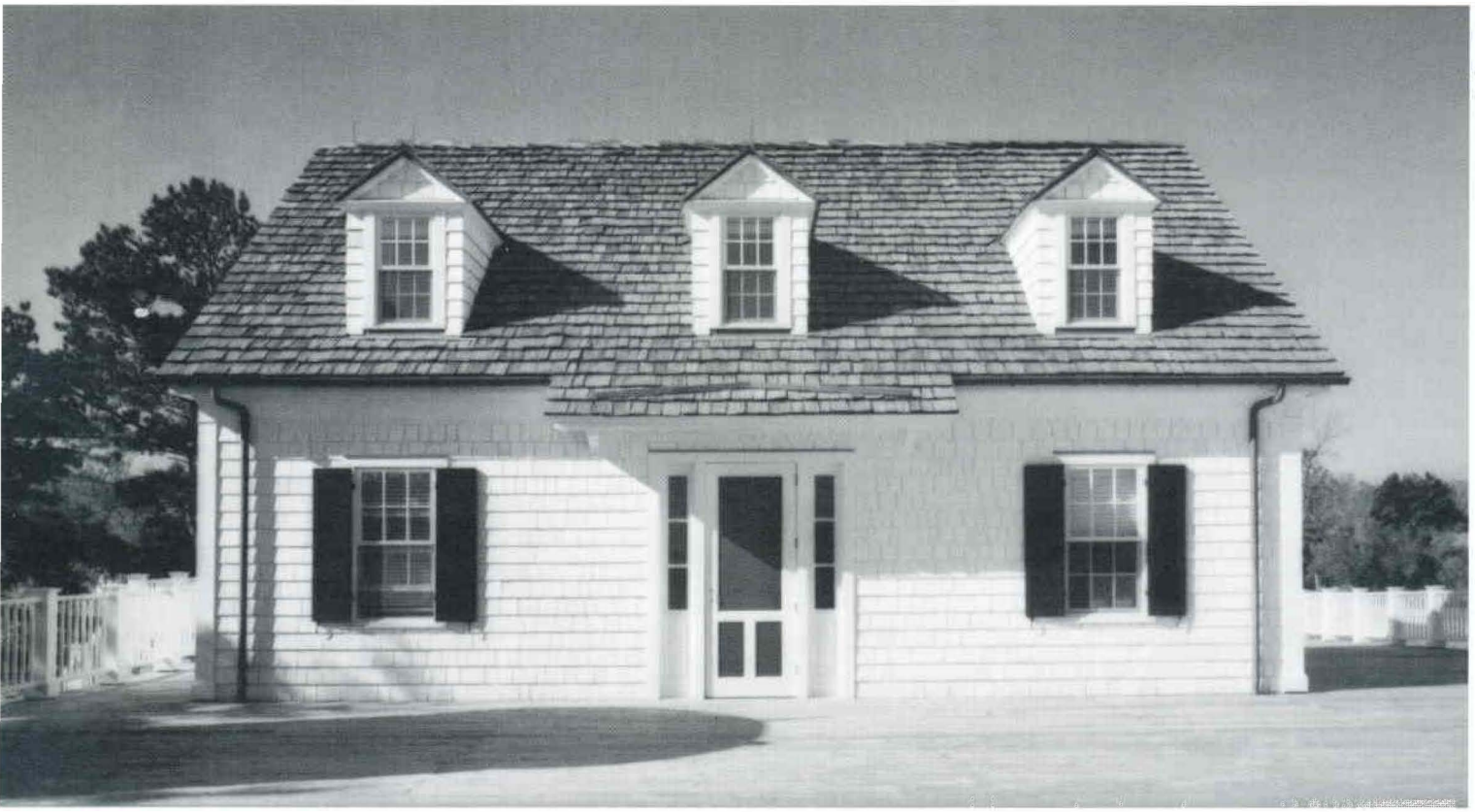


Courtesy of Steven Small

As we added pieces that did not formerly exist, like the Keeper's Cottage, Pump House and Garage, we asked ourselves, "How do we add a building to this building?" Taking cues from indigenous Eastern Shore architectural types, we decided that they should be separate buildings that would contribute as parts of the entire composition.[83]

—Jeff Bushman

A Keeper's Cottage was added to the station to provide accessible living quarters for disabled guests and on-site living quarters for some of the station staff. A separate three-bay garage building was also added to house mechanical systems and maintenance equipment storage. A great deck and entrance ramp were constructed as a part of the station entrance and consistent with its original configuration. The new deck was intended as an outdoor public space—a forum defined by the Main Building, Boathouse, Keeper's Cottage, and two large water cisterns.



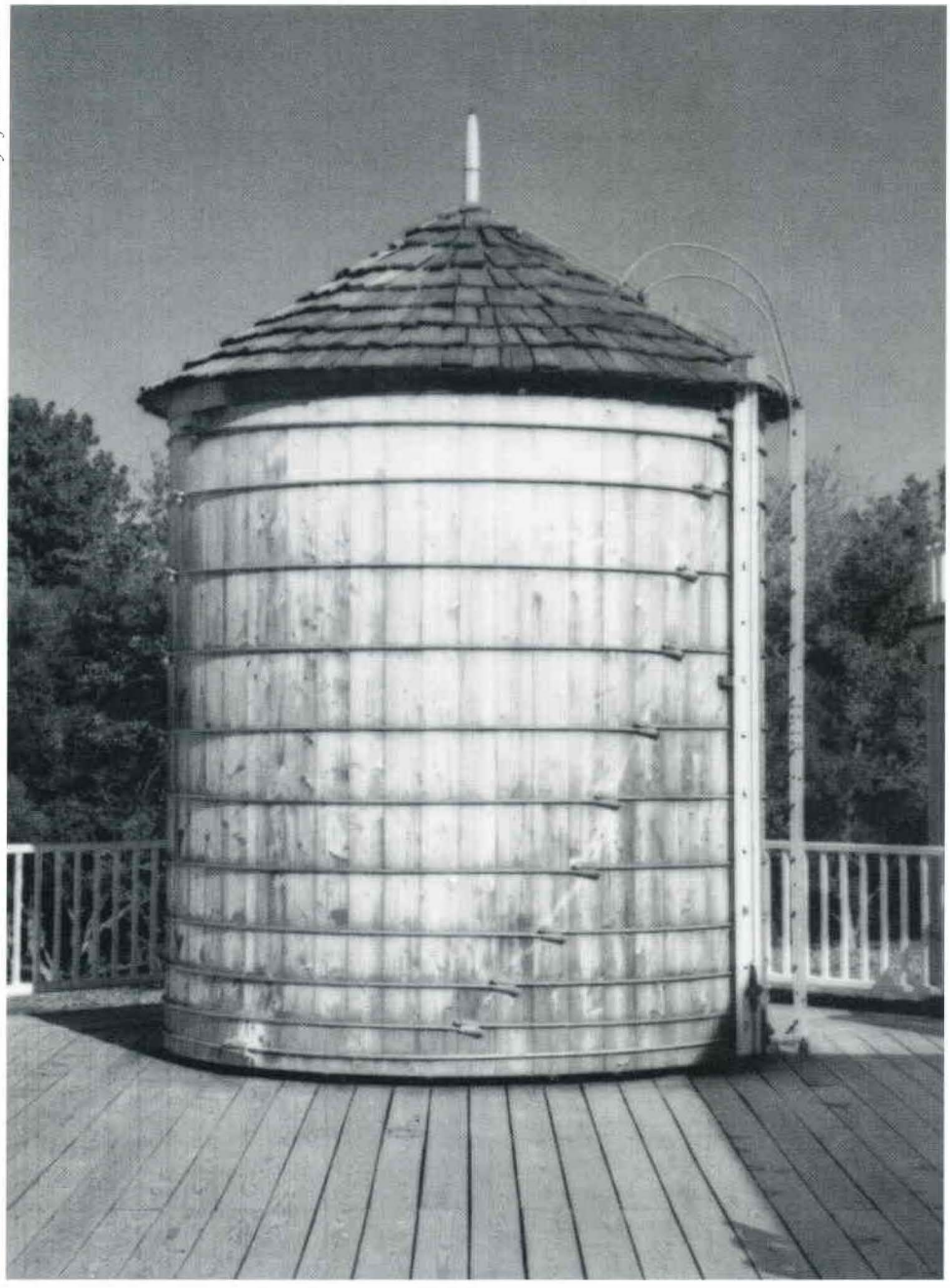
Courtesy of Steven Small

The east elevation of the completed Keeper's Cottage.

Courtesy of Steven Small

The southwest elevation of the completed Main Building and Boathouse from deck level.

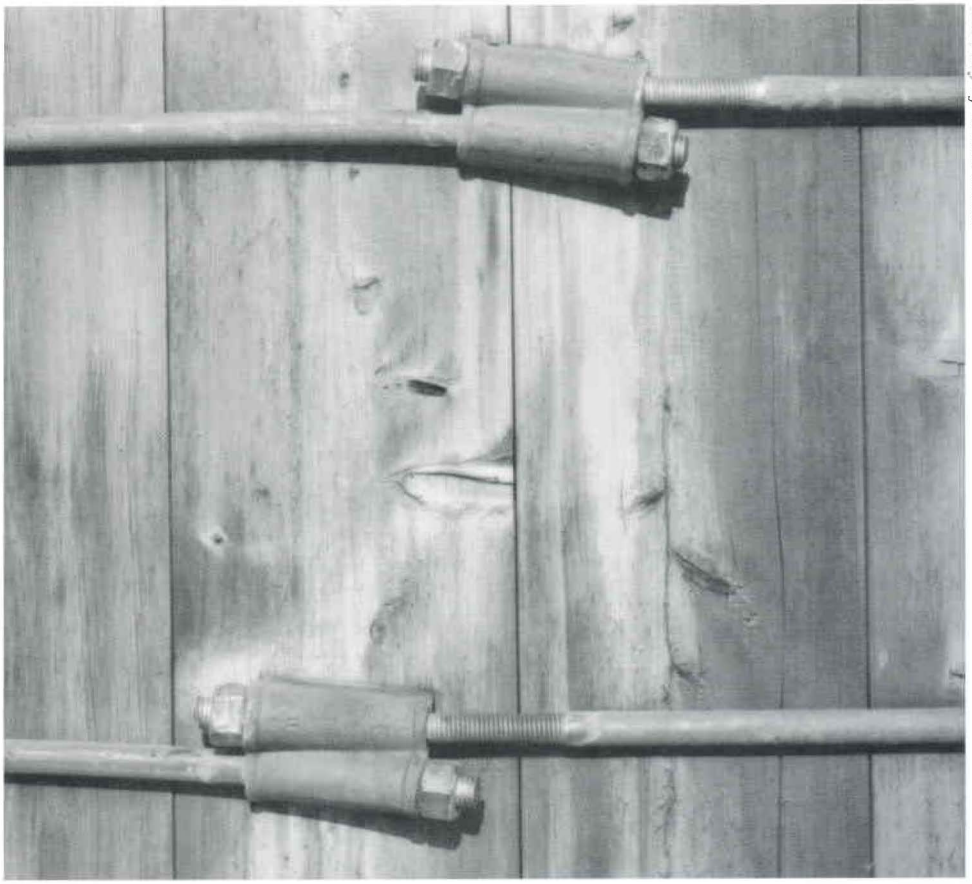
The seven-thousand-gallon, twelve-foot-diameter cisterns were constructed of tank-grade Alaskan yellow cedar and yellow pine reinforced on the outside by a series of steel hoops. With the modern facility, the water would be used for the fire sprinkler system instead of potable water. The fourteen thousand gallons of water dedicated to fire suppression ensured that the Main Building was not required to have outside fire escapes from its second and third floors. Attaching an external fire stair to the building would have compromised all efforts dedicated to preserving the station's character or overall architectural integrity. In keeping with tradition, the fabricator of the station's original cisterns, Hal-Woolford Tank Company of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was commissioned to undertake construction of the new ones.



Courtesy of Steven Small

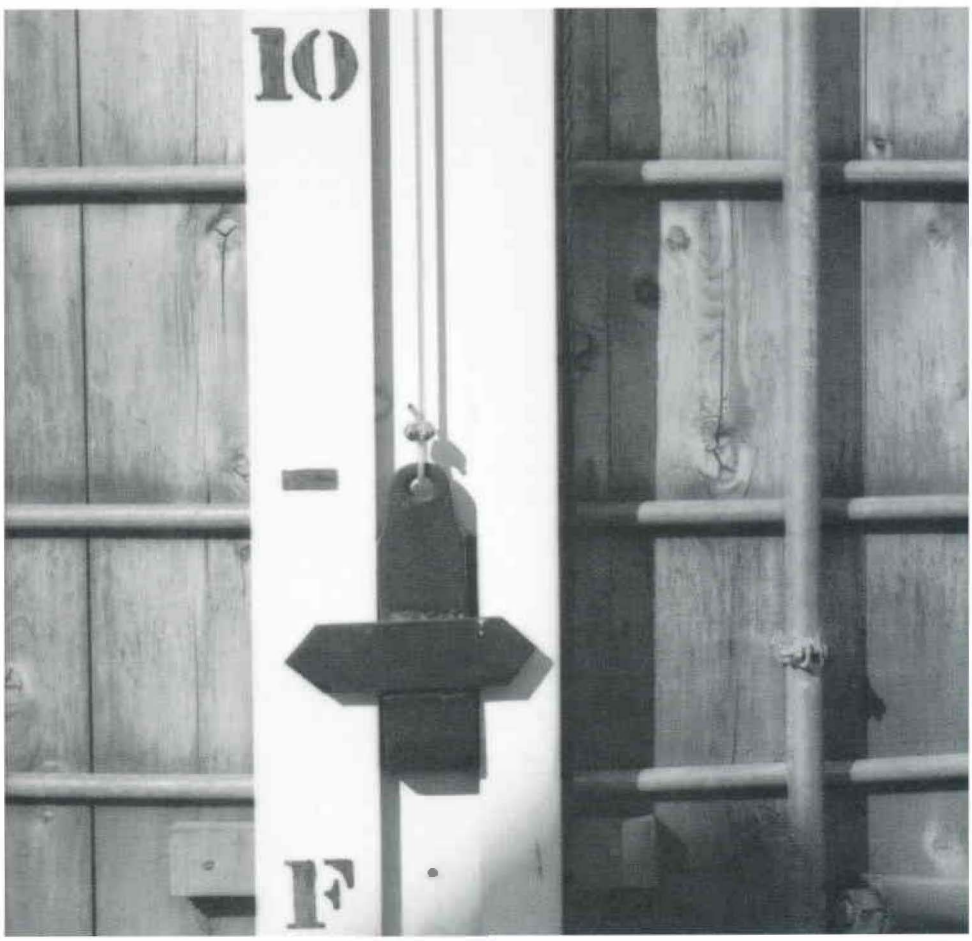
This photograph shows one of the two new water cisterns.

The retaining hoop enclosure and fastener for one of the new water cisterns.



Courtesy of Steven Small

The water level gauge for one of the new cisterns.



Courtesy of Steven Small

It is difficult to go through a construction project like this and not become just a wee bit cynical about things. Armada/Hoffler's construction superintendent, Bruce Hendrick, told me in January [2001] that we were 95 percent complete. That really meant that we were about halfway done. I guess another way to look at it is that it takes 95 percent of the time to complete the last 50 percent of the work. Bruce was a good solid guy, though . . . it was obvious that he was personally committed to the project, and the project was completed under Armada/Hoffler's bid price—with a bare minimum of change orders.

—Richard Ayers

In the final tally, cost for construction of the project was $250 per square foot or just under $3 million total. Plaster and paint formed a thin veneer to hide much of the overall cost. Fifty-one percent of the construction cost was comprised of building components not visible after completion of construction. These items included fire sprinkler systems, plumbing, heating and air-conditioning, electrical service, and weather insulation. The square-foot costs reflected construction of the base building only. Relocating the building from Cobb's Island, the specially designed foundation system, replacement roof, and associated structural repairs, or interior finishes and furnishings were not included.[84]

We really gained a very proud sense of history. . . . When we would eat lunch at the Chesapeake Bay Café [in nearby Cheriton, Virginia], people knew we were the architects or somehow involved in the project and they would come by and comment on the project, its progress—or at times the lack of it. They really cared very deeply about the project. The building is a local landmark that cements a community together.[85]

—Jeff Dreyfus

The south elevation of the completed Keeper's Cottage, Main Building, and Boathouse in Oyster.

Courtesy of Steven Small

The project was considered by some a test of the physical realities of building against the community-based conservation philosophy of The Nature Conservancy. Perhaps the project could have been executed on a shorter time line with less, albeit sincere, introspection. Time in grade, however, provided opportunity to make informed and thoughtful decisions at important milestones in the process. It provided a shared sense of ownership by the community, design team, and The Nature Conservancy.

I really had just the coolest job that day. First I said, "Yea, it's done!!!" Then I stood inside the front door greeting people with Johnnie Crumb (Johnnie's grandfather had been Cobb's Island station keeper from 1878 to 1894). Johnnie and I would thank them for coming and watch their faces light up as they looked around. It was just a great day.[86]

—Richard Ayers

The newly completed Cobb's Island Station was opened to the public on Saturday, 9 June 2001.

The east elevation of the completed Main Building and Boathouse in Oyster.

Courtesy of Steven Small

The north elevation of the completed Main Building and Keeper's Cottage in Oyster.

Courtesy of Steven Small

The west elevation of the completed Main Building and Keeper's Cottage in Oyster.

The Consulting Design Team

Architects: Bushman Dreyfus Architects, PLC, Charlottesville, Virginia

Structural Engineer: Speight, Marshall and Francis, Inc., Virginia Beach, Virginia

Mechanical/Electrical/Plumbing Engineers: Allsbrook-Goodman, Inc., Virginia Beach, Virginia

Landscape Architect: Greg Bleam, ASLA, Charlottesville, Virginia

Lighting Designer: Mark Schuyler Lighting Design, Inc., Charlottesville, Virginia

Civil Engineer: Rickmond Engineering, Williamsburg, Virginia

Environmental Consultant: Coastal Resources, Inc., Franktown, Virginia

General Contractor: Armada/Hoffler Construction Company, Inc., Virginia Beach, Virginia

Building Moving Contractor: Expert Construction and House Movers, Inc., Virginia Beach, Virginia

The renovated cupola has a new spiral stair.

Courtesy of Steven Small

Foundation Contractor: Creative Structures Contractors, Inc., Virginia Beach, Virginia

Building Stabilization: Blades Construction, Inc., Pocomoke, Maryland

Virginia Eastern Shore Corporation, Inc., Richard Schreiber, President

The Nature Conservancy–Virginia Coast Reserve Project Team

Director: John M. Hall

Assistant Director: Lynn M. Badger

Director of Land Programs: Peter G. Rowe

Island Programs Director: Richard Ayers

Planning Consultant: Paradigm Design, Inc., Reston, Virginia
Vladimir Gavrilovic

Landscape Architect: Ron M. Kagawa, ASLA, Arlington, Virginia

Interior and Landscape Design: Inside/Outside, Inc., Highlands, North Carolina
Corbin Tucker, AIA, and Robert Tucker

Endnotes

1. *Northampton County, Virginia, Patent Book No. 15*: 291–292, as cited in Cobb's Island Chain of Title dated 16 June 1971:2. Eastville, Va.: B. W. Mears Jr., Attorney at Law.
2. *Northampton County, Virginia, Deed Book No. 31*: 66. Deed of Bargain and Sale dated March 11, 1839.
3. Paul Hargis, oral history referencing P. J. Ellis by Rick Kellam.
4. George Hurley and Suzanne Hurley, 57–59.
5. Newspaper article of unknown origin.
6. Ralph Shanks and York Wick, 11.
7. U.S. Civil Service Commission.
8. Ralph Shanks and York Wick, 107.
9. Kimball. *Organization & Methods of the United States Life Saving Service,* 1904, 10
10. Kimball. 1896, 375, figure 1.
11. Charles Sterling. *Hog Island, Virginia.* Hog Island: Self-published, 1903.
12. Assateague Lighthouse National Monument. U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service. Assateague, Virginia.
13. Author's note.
14. Press release. Public Information Division—U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, D.C., 28 January 1915.
15. Ralph Shanks and York Wick, 217–220.
16. Architect Francis W. Chandler practiced under Alfred Mullett, supervising architect of the U.S. Treasury Department, until his departure to form the Boston-based firm of Cabot and Chandler in 1875.
17. A highly modified 1876-Type station was constructed specially for the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. The Exhibition was perhaps the most prominent forum to influence public opinion and garner political support for the Life Saving Service. In keeping with opportunities presented by the venue, the Centennial Exhibition station was finely appointed. Much effort was expended on the detailing of balusters, handrails, posts, brackets and scrollwork, and fish-scale shingle siding. Fish-scale shingles added to each façade visually separated the first and second floors. Above the boatroom doors, a highly articulated dormitory balcony was added within the projecting attic gable of the boathouse. Although the basic building type remained the same, the combination of visually light ornament with oversized architectural elements such as corner posts and exterior diagonal wind bracing added a three-dimensional early Queen Anne architectural quality to the building. The station was fully outfitted with all appurtenances and equipment including a carefully selected station crew to act as docents for visitors. The station crew demonstrated dramatic hallmarks of its rescue techniques including breeches buoy efficiency drills, launching surfboats and other rescue procedures, each dedicated to furthering public understanding of the perils and importance of the Service. At conclusion of the Exhibition, the station was relocated and pressed into immediate service at Cape May, New Jersey.
18. Cobb's Island Chain of Title dated 16 June 1971:18, Eastville, Va., B. W. Mears Jr., Attorney at Law.
19. David Wright and David Zoby, 192.
20. *U.S. Life Saving Service List of Persons Who Have Died.*
21. David Wright and David Zoby, 231.
22. Kimball. *Organization & Methods of the United States Life Saving Service,* 1904, 10.
23. "Local Life Saving Stations Early Keepers and Crews" Tabulated from the 8 August 1936 *Penninsula Enterprise.*
24. Dennis L. Noble and Michael S. Raynes, 2.
25. Ralph Shanks and York Wick, 245.
26. Kimball. *Organization & Methods of the United States Life Saving Service,* 1890, 94.
27. Kimball. *Organization & Methods of the United States Life Saving Service,* 1891, 191–192.
28. Kimball. *Organization & Methods of the United States Life Saving Service,* 1896, 241.
29. Ibid., 182, 316–317.
30. *Peninsula Enterprise,* 27 January 1905. Recounting the storm's ten-year anniversary.
31. Kimball. *Organization & Methods of the United States Life Saving Service,* 1899, 235.
32. Ibid., 251.
33. Ibid., 252.

34. Hurley, 40–42.
35. Ibid.
36. Mills, 156.
37. *Peninsula Enterprise,* 5 July 1930 and 22 November 1930.
38. Mills, 156.
39. *Keeper's Log, 23–25 August 1933,* Cobb's Island Station, Virginia.
40. U.S. Coast Guard, *Operations Instruction No. 26–57,* 2.
41. Chairs, seats, or other similar items were not allowed in the cupolas. It was believed that literally "standing watch" ensured the complete attention of station crew members during their duty shifts.
42. Wilkinson, 22, 24.
43. Dallas O'Neal and William Jones, oral histories.
44. Miles B. Barnes and Barry R. Truitt, 193–200.
45. Jean Bell, oral history.
46. U.S. Coast Guard, *Instructions for United States Coast Guard Stations, 1934,* 10.
47. In June 1942, submarine-based German saboteurs came ashore at Amagansett, New York, and Ponte Vedra, Florida. In New York, the saboteurs were discovered almost immediately by an unarmed Coast Guard beach patrolman named John Cullen. One of the shore party was captured approximately a week later in Washington, D.C., where he was again identified in a lineup by John Cullen. In September 1944, German infiltrators again came ashore along the coast of Maine, again only to be captured shortly afterward. "Nazi Saboteurs Captured! FDR Orders Secret Tribunal, 1942 Precedent Invoked by Bush Against Al Queda." *Washington Post Magazine*, George Lardner Jr., 13 January 2002, 12–14.
48. U.S. Department of the Army, 65–72.
49. Ibid., 67.
50. Gannon.
51. U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, 1.
52. Malcolm F. Willoughby.
53. Dallas O'Neal, oral history.
54. Chenery, 18.
55. William Russell, oral history.
56. Ibid.
57. U.S. Coast Guard, *Operating Plan Change Order No. A4-2/5,* 1.
58. Unnamed source, January 2002.
59. "Troop 44 Spends Week at Cobb's Island." *Oxford (Pennsylvania) Press,* 8 July 1970, 3.
60. "Va. Islands Now Haven for Falcons." *Virginian-Pilot,* 13 August 1979, C-2–C-4.
61. "High Above the City a Falcon Lives." *Baltimore Sun Magazine*, 9 September 1979, 5–11.
62. Rick Kellam, oral history.
63. *Daily News Leader*, 4 July 1998.
64. *Eastern Shore News,* 7 March 1998.
65. Unnamed source, January 2002.
66. Jeff Bushman and Jeff Dreyfus, oral histories, January 2002.
67. Jeff Bushman, oral history.
68. Jeff Dreyfus, oral history.
69. Ibid.
70. *Eastern Shore News,* 2 May 1998.
71. Ibid., 7 March 1998.
72. *Virginian-Pilot,* 7 May 1998.
73. Ibid., 1 May 1998
74. *Washington Post,* 2 May 1998.
75. Ibid.
76. The Nature Conservancy–Virginia Coast Reserve, "Parramore Options Explored Following Fire," 3.
77. Jeff Dreyfus, oral history.
78. Ibid.
79. Richard Ayers, oral history.
80. Jeff Dreyfus, oral history.
81. Ibid.
82. Ibid.
83. Jeff Bushman, oral history.
84. The Nature Conservancy–Virginia Coast Reserve, *Cobb's Island Station: Project Budget & Final Construction Cost Analysis.*
85. Jeff Dreyfus, oral history.
86. Richard Ayers, oral history.

Bibliography

Texts and Documents

Badger, Curtis J., and Rick Kellam. *The Barrier Islands: A Photographic History of Life on Hog, Cobb, Smith, Cedar, Parramore, Metompkin and Assateague.* Harrisburg. Pa.: Stackpole Books, 1989.

Barnes, Miles B., and Barry R. Truitt. *The Seashore Chronicles. Three Centuries of the Virginia Barrier Islands.* Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1997.

Chenery, Richard L., III. *Old Coast Guard Stations–Volume One. Virginia: Popes Island to False Cape.* Richard Chenery III, 1998.

Chewning, Alpheus J. *The Approaching Storm: U-Boats off the Virginia Coast During World War II.* Lively, Va.: Brandylane Publishers, 1994.

Cobb's Island Chain of Title. Eastville, Va.: B. W. Mears Jr., Attorney at Law, 16 June 1971.

Gannon, Michael V. *Operation Drumbeat: The Dramatic True Story of Germany's First U-Boat Attacks along the Atlantic Coast in WW II.* New York: Harper Collins Publishing Co. Inc., 1991.

Hurley, George, and Suzanne Hurley. *Shipwrecks and Rescues along the Barrier Islands of Delaware, Maryland and Virginia.* Norfolk/Virginia Beach, Va.: The Donning Company Publishers, Inc., 1984.

Kellam, Amine Cosby. *Once a Shoreman.* Norfolk/Virginia Beach, Va.: The Donning Company Publishers, Inc., 1986.

Kimball, Sumner I. *Organization & Methods of the United States Life Saving Service.* Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1879, 1889, 1891, 1896, 1899, 1904, and 1905.

Mills, Eric. *Chesapeake Bay in the Civil War.* Centreville, Md.: Tidewater Publishers, Inc., 1996.

———. *Chesapeake Rumrunners of the Roaring Twenties.* Centreville, Md.: Tidewater Publishers, Inc., 2000.

Nature Conservancy–Virginia Coast Reserve, The. *Cobb's Island Station: Project Budget & Final Construction Cost Analysis.* Internal Document, 2001.

Noble, Dennis L. *That Others Might Live: The U.S. Life-Saving Service, 1878–1915.* Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1994.

Noble, Dennis L., and Michael S. Raynes. *U.S. Coast Guard Historical Register Series: Virginia. Register of the Stations and Keepers of the U.S. Life Saving Service.* Washington: U.S. Coast Guard Archives, n.d.

Northampton County, Virginia. Patent Book No. 15: 291–292, as cited in Cobb's Island Chain of Title dated 16 June 1971. Eastville, Va.: B. W. Mears Jr., Attorney at Law.

Pouliot, Richard A., and Julie J. Pouliot. *Shipwrecks on the Virginia Coast & the Men of the Life Saving Service.* Centreville, Md.: Tidewater Publishers, Inc., 1994.

Shanks, Ralph, and York Wick. *The U.S. Life-Saving Service Heroes, Rescues and Architecture of the Early Coast Guard.* Lisa Woo Shanks, ed. Petaluma, Calif.: Castano Books, Inc. Petaluma, 1996. Fourth printing, 2000.

Shomette, Donald G. *Pirates on the Chesapeake: Being a True History of Pirates, Picaroons & Raiders on Chesapeake Bay 1610–1807.* Centreville, Md.: Tidewater Publishers, Inc., 1985.

Turman, Nora Miller. *The Eastern Shore of Virginia 1603–1964.* Onancock, Va.: Eastern Shore News, Inc., 1964.

U.S. Civil Service Commission. *Regulations Governing Admission to the Grade of Surfman.* Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1912.

U.S. Coast Guard. *Instructions for United States Coast Guard Stations, 1934.* Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1934.

———. *Manual for Lifeboatmen, Able Seamen and Qualified Members of Engine Department, and Tankermen.* Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950.

———. *Manual for Lifeboatmen, Able Seamen and Qualified Members of Engine Department.* Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960.

———. *Operating Plan Change Order No. A4-2/5.* Washington: U.S. Coast Guard, 4 March 1964.

———. *Operations Instruction No. 25-57.* Washington: U.S. Coast Guard, 29 May 1957.

———. *Public Information Division Press Release.* Washington: U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, 28 January 1915.

———. *Public Information Division Press Release.* Washington: U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, 5 November 1956.

———. *Register of the Commissioned and Warrant Officers and Cadets, and Ships and Stations of the United States Coast Guard.* 1 January 1934. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1934.

———. *Register of the Commissioned and Warrant Officers and Cadets, and Ships and Stations of the United States Coast Guard.* 1 July 1937. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1937.

———. *The Coastguardsman's Manual.* Annapolis, Md.: The Naval Institute; Third Edition, 1958, Second Printing, 1960.

———. *U.S. Life Saving Service Station Keeper's Log. 23–25 August 1933. Cobb's Island Station.* Philadelphia: U.S. Coast Guard Archives, 1933.

U.S. Department of the Army. *Coast Defense Warning Service Chesapeake Bay Sector Patrol Areas CBS 5ND Joint Plan of Defense of Beaches. Mobile Force Description.* 16 April 1943. Washington: U.S. Government declassified war document, 1943.

U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. *U-Boats off the Coast?* Cape Lookout National Seashore–Cultural Resources Information/Internet-site, 2001.

U.S. Life Saving Heritage Association. *Chronology of Early Lifesaving.* Information/Internet-site, 2001.

U.S. Life Saving Service. *U.S. Life Saving Service List of Persons Who Have Died: by reason of injury received or disease contracted in the line of duty in the Life Saving Service since the origin of the present system, as shown in the records of the Treasury Department* (excerpt). Washington: U.S. Coast Guard Archives, 2001.

Willoughby, Malcolm F. *The U.S. Coast Guard in World War II.* Annapolis, Md.: U.S. Naval Institute, 1957.

Wright, David, and David Zoby. *Fire on the Beach: Recovering the Lost Story of Richard Etheridge and Pea Island Lifesavers.* New York: Scribner & Sons, 2000.

Newspapers and Periodicals

Baltimore Sun: 20 October 1896 and 9 September 1979.

Daily News Leader: 4 July 1998.

Eastern Shore News: 5 October 1906, 10 February 1910, 23 September 1910, 24 January 1936, 7 May 1955, 8 May 1955, 19 May 1955, 27 June 1963, 7 March 1998, and 2 May 1998.

Kellam, Amine. "The Cobb's Island Story." *The Virginia Cavalcade* 23, no. 4 (spring 1974): 18–27. Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1974.

Nature Conservancy–Virginia Coast Reserve, The. "Parramore Options Explored Following Fire." *The Islands: Magazine of the Virginia Coast Reserve* (fall 1999): 3. Nassawadox, Va.: Virginia Coast Reserve, 1999.

Northampton Ledger: 14 October 1896.

Northampton Times: 28 November 1935.

Oxford Press: 8 July 1970.

Penninsula Enterprise: 24 August 1882, 30 July 1887, 30 April 1892, 19 September 1896, 17 October 1896, 5 December 1896, 27 March 1897, 16 April 1898, 11 June 1898, 16 January 1904, 10 February 1923, 5 July 1930, 22 November 1930, 25 January 1936, 8 August 1936, 1 July 1938, 20 May 1949, and 12 May 1955.

Virginian-Pilot: 13 August 1979, 1 May 1998, and 7 May 1998.

Washington Post: 2 May 1998, and 13 January 2002.

Wilkinson, Dorothy S. "Facts Available for Preservation and Study of U.S. Coast Guard Mid-1930s Era Roosevelt-type Lifeboat Stations." *Wreck & Rescue: The Journal of the U.S. Life Saving Heritage Association* (fall 1999). Caledonia, Mich.: U.S. Life Saving Heritage Association, 1999.

Oral Histories

Ayers, Richard. Oyster, Va., July and August 2001.

Bell, Jean. Bell Haven, Va., January 2002.

Bushman, Jeff. Charlottesville, Va., January 2002.

Crumb, Johnnie. Oyster, Va., July 2001.

Dreyfus, Jeff. Charlottesville, Va., January 2002.

Gavrilovic, Vladimir. Reston, Va., July and August 2001.

Hargis, Paul. Northampton County, Va., 1992.

Jones, William. Chincoteague, Va., July 2001.

Kellam, Rick. Exmore, Va., November 2001.

O'Neal, Dallas. Virginia Beach, Va., July 2001.

Russell, William. West Chester, Ohio, January 2002.

Truitt, Barry. Nassawadox, Va., August 2001.

Tyler, Fielding L., Virginia Beach, Va., July 2001.

Unnamed Source. Norfolk, Va., January 2002.

Unnamed Source. Norfolk, Va., July 2002.

Credits

This project would not have been possible without the dedicated assistance of the following persons. Thank you for your indefatigable encouragement, support, and patience: Dr. Miles Barnes, Accomack, Virginia; Jeff Bushman, Charlottesville, Virginia; Jeff Dreyfus, Charlottesville, Virginia; Amy Lane, Charlottesville, Virginia; Steven Small, AIA, Alexandria, Virginia; Thelma Peterson, Cheriton, Virginia; Staff of The Nature Conservancy's Virginia Coast Reserve at Brownsville/Nassawadox, Virginia; Scott Harvard and Lisa Lentz, Shore Bank Northampton and Accomack County, Virginia; Rose Rulon, Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce, Melfa, Virginia; Dennis N. Walton, Richard A. Horwege, and Jeremy Gray, Virginia Beach, Virginia. Thank you to the descendants of the Cobb and Cosby families, including special gratitude to Thomas Lucius Cobb and his wife, Lola Garrett Cobb.

Thank you to the students and faculty of the Virginia Tech College of Architecture and Urban Studies and its Washington-Alexandria Architecture Center for providing a foundation from which to undertake this project. To the students, alumni, and faculty who have participated in our adventures on Virginia's Eastern Shore, thank you for your willingness to explore this magical place. Indeed, we will always be a part of the Alexandria Center and the Center will always be a part of us—for that we will always be in its debt.

Index

Introduction
Cobb, George, 6
Cobb's Salvaging Company, 6
Davis, Jefferson; President of the Confederacy, 6
Fabin, Andrew John, 6
George II of Great Britain, France & Ireland, 6
Gooch, William; Governor of Virginia, 6
Grant, Frederick, 6
Grant, Ulysses S., 6
Great Sand Shoal Island, 6
Lee, Firzhugh; Governor of Virginia, 6
Metompkin Inlet Station, 7
The Nature Conservancy, 7

I. The Cobb's Island Story
A. & M. Robbins Company; New York, New York, 10
Barret, Edmond, 10
Cape Cod, Massachusetts, 8
Carpenter, Esther, 9
Cobb, Albert, 8, 13, 14
Cobb, Elkanah, 8, 14
Cobb, Elkanah, Jr., 8
Cobb, Nathan, Jr., 8, 13, 14
Cobb, Nathan Fosque, Sr., 8, 9, 10, 11, 14
Cobb, Sallie, 14
Cobb, Scotter, 8
Cobb, Warren, 8, 13, 14
Cobb's Island Church, 12, 14
Cobb's Island Hotel, 11, 12
Cobb's Mill, 11
Cobb's Station; NYP&N Railroad, 13
Columbia, 9, 15
Cricket, 10, 15
Decoys of Nathan, Elkanah & Albert Cobb, 14
Doane, Nancy, 8, 9
Eastham, Massachuserts, 8
Eolus, 12
Fishing, 8, 11, 12
Fitcherr, William & Elizabeth, 9
Great Sand Shoal Island, 9
Halloway, Ben, 11
Harry Lee, 10, 15
Larnard, Mrs. C.T., 11
market hunting, 10, 11
Maryland House, 11
Nottingham's Landing, Virginia, 12, 13
NWA Cobb, 13
October, 1896 storm, 8
Old Bay Line, 12
Osceola, 13
Richardson, Nancy, 9
Salr, 9
Satchell, William, 9
sea bathing, 11, 12
Sturgis, J. R., 14
Sue, 12, 13
Tammany Hall, 11
Truirt House, 11
Vessels thought to have been aided by the Cobb Brothers, 15
Virginia House, 11
War Between The Srares, 11

II. Lifesaving and the Virginia Barrier Islands
American Civil War, 17
Assateague Lighthouse National Monument, 24
Black Beard (Edward Teach), 16
Coston flare, 22
Hayes, Rutherford B., President, 17
Italian Ridge, 24
Kimball, Sumner Increase, 17, 21
Life Saving Station Service, 16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26
Onancock, Virginia, 17, 18
Oyster, Virginia, 25
Revenue Cutter Service, 17, 26
Revenue Marine Bureau, 17, 26
Rich, Benjamin S., 17, 18
Sterling, Charles, 23
The Swash, 17
The Thoroughfare, 25
Travis, W. F., 25
United States Coast Guard, 25, 26
United States Department of Treasury, 17
United States Life Saving Service-Fifth District, 17, 18
United States Revenue Cutter Service, 17, 26
Wadsworth, Frank G. F., 17
Wig-Wag Drill, 20

III. The Cobb's Island Life Saving Stations
1875-1934: Forefathers
1876-Type Station Pattern, 29, 30
Andrews, John R., 28, 36, 37, 40, 41, 43
April, 1878 storm, 29
Assateague Beach Station, 31, 47
August, 1933 Storm, 48, 49, 50
Babbitt, C. E., Jr., 34, 39
Badger, James K., 29
Baltimore Cottage, 37
Bloxom, Bill, 28, 36
Boole, Haywood, 51
Cape Charles, Virginia, 31, 34, 41, 46
Carpenter, John G., 29
Carroll G. Deering, 46
Chandler, Francis W., 29
Chincoteague, Virginia, 31, 34, 39, 42, 49, 50
Coard, Welly G., 30
Cobb, Freeman, 50
Cobb, George W., 48, 49, 50
Cobb, Warren, 38, 50
Collins, Warner, 29
Crumb, Charles, 29
Crumb, Joe, 31
Daisey, Solomon, 49
Dixie, 41
Dixon, Thomas, 35, 38, 41
Doughty, Early, 51
Dunton, Thomas R., 29
Elliott, Clifton, 51
Elliott, Edward, 51
Fifth District Life Saving Stations ca. 1890, 31
Frank M. Deering, 46
George E. Dudley, 40
Goffigan, Obed G., 29
Gregerson, Nels, 51
Hog Island Light, 29
Hog Island Station, 30, 31, 51
Holden, Samuel, 42, 43
Hudson, A. A., 49
Isdell, George, 29
Jennie S. Huddell, 41
John Leonard, 51
Jones, Ashby, 35, 38
Kelley, Thomas A., 41
Kimball, Sumner I., 29, 40, 41
Lafferty, Paul, 49
Laura Tompkins, 42, 43
Loon Channel, 39, 44, 47, 48
Malcolm, 34
Manning, 46
Marsh, Herman L., 51
Marshall, George, 49
Massey, Charlie, 51
Matthes, John, 31
Melson, James T. 29
Merritt, D. M., 42, 43
Metompkin Inlet Station, 31
October, 1896 storm, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38
Oyster, Virginia, 47, 48, 49, 50
Parkinson, J. Lake, 28, 29

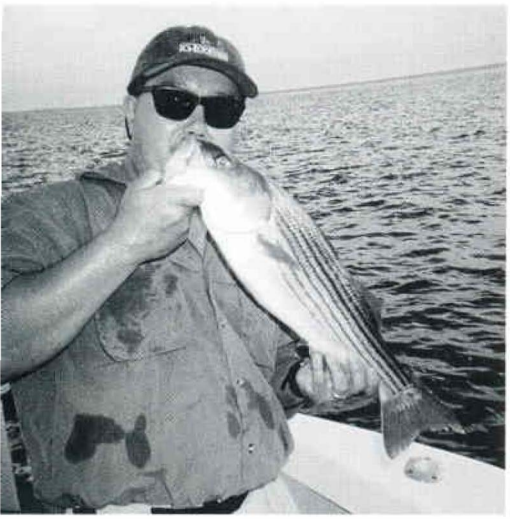
Parramore's Beach Station, 31
Phillips, Stanley G., 50
Picket Boats, 47, 48, 49, 50
Pope's Island Sration, 30, 31
Price, James A., 47
Prohibition Era, 47
Pruitt, George, 51
Rayfield, A. J., 49
Red Bank, Virginia, 48
Rich, Benjamin S., 31, 39
Rooks, Stanley, 51
Sixth District Life Saving Stations ca. 1900, 31
Smith, Edgar K., 50
Smith, Thomas B., 35, 38
Smith's Island Station, 31, 51
Spanose, Joseph T., 50
Steelman, Lee, 49, 51
Sterling, Vernon, 51
Tarr, Maurice, 51
Taylor, Bob, 51
Thomas Wharf, Virginia, 47
Tunnel, Roland W., 51
United States Coast Guard, 43, 46, 47, 48, 51
United States Life Saving Service, 28, 29, 31, 34, 39, 40, 41
Wachapreague/Cedar Island Station, 31
Wallops Beach Station, 31, 47
West, George, 49
Williams, John W., 50
Wise, Roland, 49

1935-1964: Birth
Adams, Howard, 67
Andrews, Barry L., 68, 71
Bell, Jean, 61
Bulman, Leon S., 52, 54, 61
Cape Charles Defense Force, 64
Cardwell Island, 61, 74
Cardwell-Eldridge, Virginia, 61
Cedar Island Station, 55, 60
Cheriton, Virginia, 70
Cobb Beach Station, 64
Company C, 111th Regiment, 66
Doughty, Early J., 54
Eastville, Virginia, 70
Elliott, Ralph O., 54
Emil, 52, 53
Essinger's Camp, 70
Exmore, Virginia, 70
Fisherman's Island, 64
Fifth Coast Guard District, 66, 75
Fort John Custis, 64
Godwin, Wrendo M., 67
Greenspun, Joseph, 66, 67
Gunter, Ben T., 67
Hog Island Light, 53
Hog Island Station, 67, 68
Hornsby, Chalmers B., 54
International Style architecture, 71
Jarvis, Benjamin, 68
Johnson's Store; Willis Wharf, Virginia, 67
Jones, Milton, 68
Josephine Whimsatt, 61
Kellam, George B., 52, 54
Killmon, Colie R., 54
Lewis, "Popsicle", 61
Little Machipongo Inlet Station, 55, 60, 75
Little Machipongo Inlet Station, Fire 1957, 71
Loon Channel, 54, 61
Margaret, 68
Marsh, Arthur L., 52, 54
May, 68
McCready, Warren, 70
Melody II, 70, 71
Merritt, J. L., 68
Metompkin Inlet Station, 55, 75
Mockhorn Channel, 68
Moore, H. C., 70
Motor Life Boats, 53, 71
Motor Rescue Boats, 53
Norfolk, Virginia, 68, 75
O'Neal, Dallas, 68, 70, 71
Operation Drumroll, 66
Oyster, Virginia, 52, 61, 66, 68, 70
Parramore Beach Station, 55, 60, 75
Parsons, Thomas J., 68, 71
Phillips, J. F., 71
Phyllis, 68
Public Works Administration, 55
Roosevelt Era stations, 55, 60
Russell, William, 74, 75
Sixth Coast Guard District, 53, 61
Smith, Edgar K., 54
Steelman, N. R., 70
Sterling, Robert F., 54
Telephone, Inter-Island Lines, 61
United States Coast Guard Beach Patrol Division, 64
Utility Boats, 53
Ward, Jimmy, 70
West, H. R., 70
West Marine Railway, 70
Works Progress Administration, 55
World War II Chesapeake Bay Defenses, 64

1965-1997: Lean Times
Boy Scout Troop 44; Oxford, Pennsylvania ca. 1970, 77
Byrd, Dr. Mitchell, 80
College of William & Mary, 80
Nature Conservancy-Virginia Coast Reserve, The, 77, 80
Peregrine Falcon Program, 80
Virginia Marine Resources Commission-Marine Police, 80, 81

1997-2001: Renewal
Armada/Hoffler Construction Company, Inc., 103, 106, 115, 118
Ayers, Richard, 84, 102, 104, 106, 108, 115, 116, 119
Badger, Curtis, 93
Badger, Lynn, 86, 119
Boathouse, 87, 88, 89, 90, 93, 94, 97, 98, 101, 103, 104, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 115, 116
Bunny C., 97, 98, 99
Bushman, Jeff, 86, 87, 94, 111
Bushman Dreyfus Architects, 86, 87, 118
cisterns, 88, 90, 111, 113, 114
construction costs, 115
Consulting Design Team, 118-119
Creative Structure Contractors, Inc., 95, 119
Crumb, Johnnie, 116
cupola, 91, 92, 93, 106, 110, 118
Dreyfus, Jeff, 86, 87, 93, 106, 108, 109, 115
ecorourism, 84
Expert Construction & House Movers, 96, 97, 98, 118
garage, 106, 111
Gavrilovic, Vladimir, 85, 94, 119
Hall, John M., 102, 119
Hal-Woolford Tank Company, Inc., 113
Hendrick, Bruce, 106, 108, 115
insurance, 93, 95
Keeper's Cottage, 107, 111, 112, 115, 117
Main Building, 88, 89, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 103, 104, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 115, 116, 117
Maryiko, Jim, 97
Matyiko, John, 98
Mockhorn Bay, 97
National Public Radio, 96
Nature Conservancy-Virginia Coast Reserve, The, 84, 85, 86, 87, 94, 96, 102, 119
Northampton County Zoning Commission, 94
Oyster, Virginia, 85, 86, 93, 94, 95, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 104, 107, 108, 111, 112, 113, 115, 116, 117
Parramore Island Station, April 1999, Fire, 102
Pump House, 106, 111
Rowe, Pete, 87, 119
Sawhill, John C., 96
Schreiber, Richard, 84, 119
Site Entrance Road, 104
site selection, 85, 86
Truitt, Barry, 86
Virginia Eastern Shore Corporation, 84, 85, 87, 102, 119

The Authors



Ron M. Kagawa, ASLA, is Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture at the Virginia Tech College of Architecture and Urban Studies, Washington-Alexandria Architecture Center in Alexandria, Virginia. He holds an undergraduate degree in Landscape Architecture from the University of Texas–Arlington and a graduate degree in Architecture from Virginia Tech. He is a Landscape Architect and currently resides in Arlington, Virginia, with his wife, Landscape Architect, Jill E. Yutan.

James Richard (Rick) Kellam is an Eastern Shore native whose family lineage can be traced back to the 1700s as residents of Hog Island, Virginia. His grandparents, Ella Mae and John Samuel Melvin, were residents of the Village of Broadwater on Hog Island. He previously worked as a waterman and held the rank of Captain with the Virginia Marine Resources Commission. He attended The College of William and Mary and the United States Coast Guard Maritime Law Enforcement School. Rick is a well-known Eastern Shore historian and extraordinary artifact collector. He is currently the owner of Broadwater Bay Eco-tours and resides near Exmore, Virginia, with his wife, Connie K. Kellam.

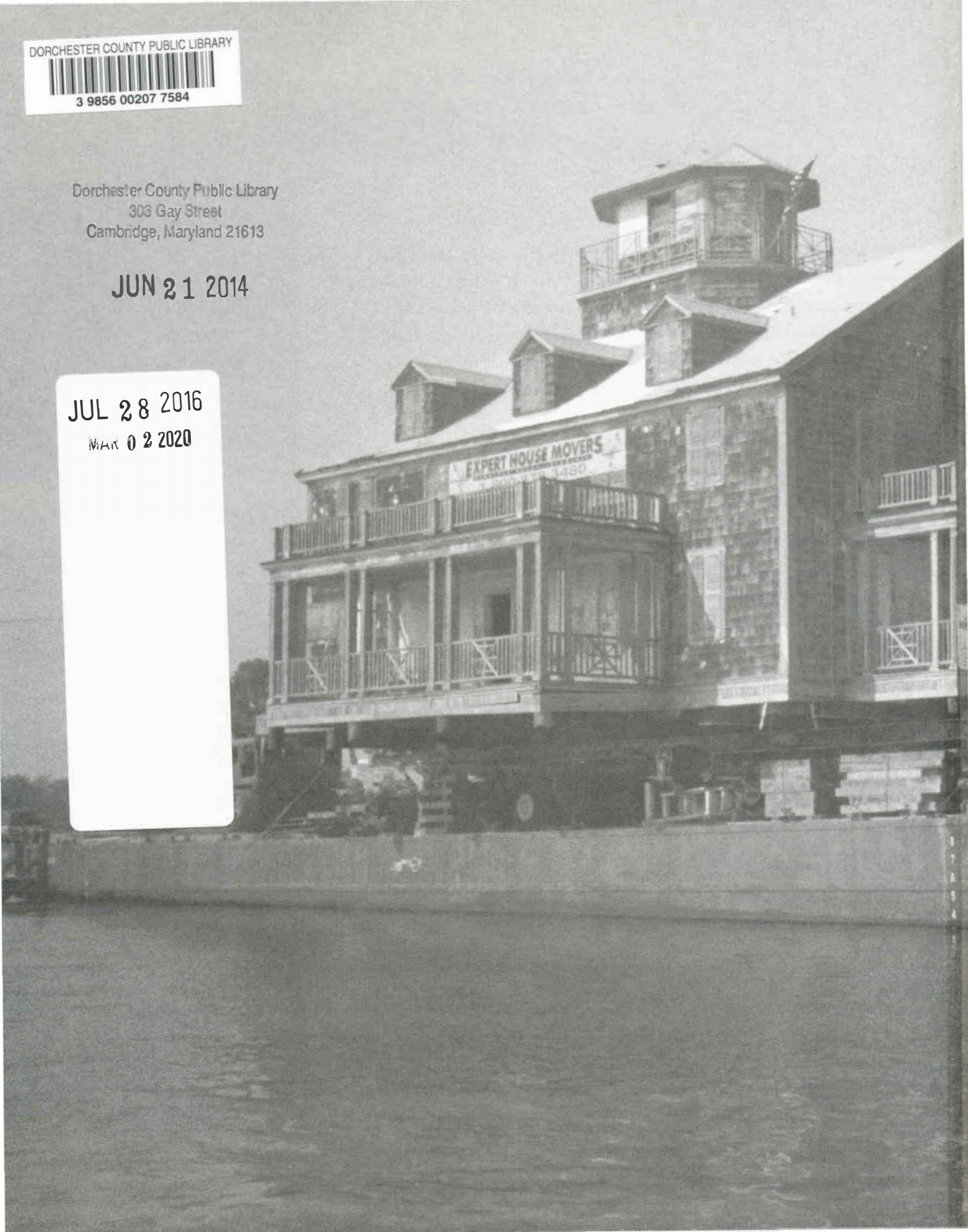
Amine Cosby Kellam, author of *Once a Shoreman* and *A Shoreman's Travel Tales,* was born on the Eastern Shore of Virginia where she has lived most of her life. She holds a B.A. degree from Wittenberg University and a Master of Arts degree from The Ohio State University. She received the 1973 Delacy Gray Medal for Conservation by the Garden Club of Virginia, was Eastern Shore Citizen of the Year in 1981, and received the 1984 Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson Award by Keep America Beautiful, Inc. and the 2000 Melba H. Massie Award—Virginia's highest award for beautification. Mrs. Kellam is the great-great-granddaughter of Nathan Fosque Cobb Sr. She presently resides at Lochwood in Northampton County, Virginia.

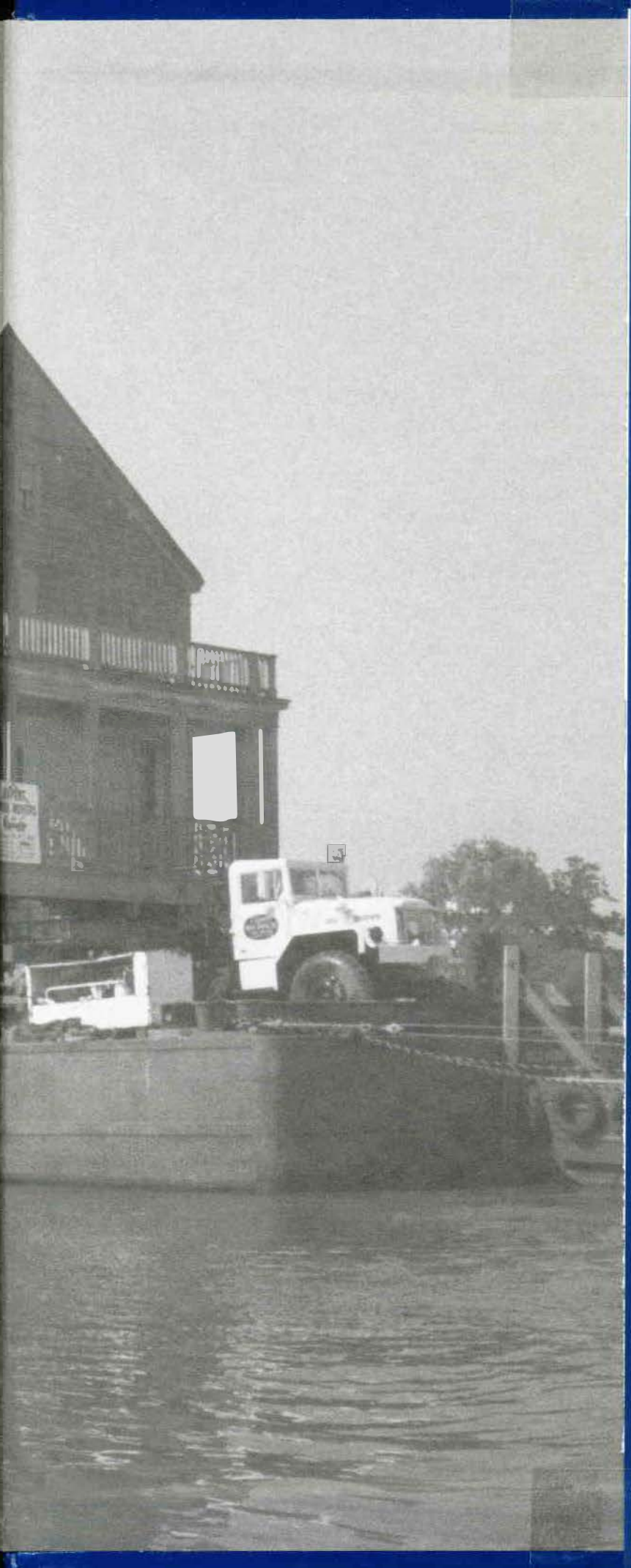
DORCHESTER COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 9856 00207 7584

Dorchester County Public Library
303 Gay Street
Cambridge, Maryland 21613

JUN 21 2014

JUL 28 2016
MAR 02 2020



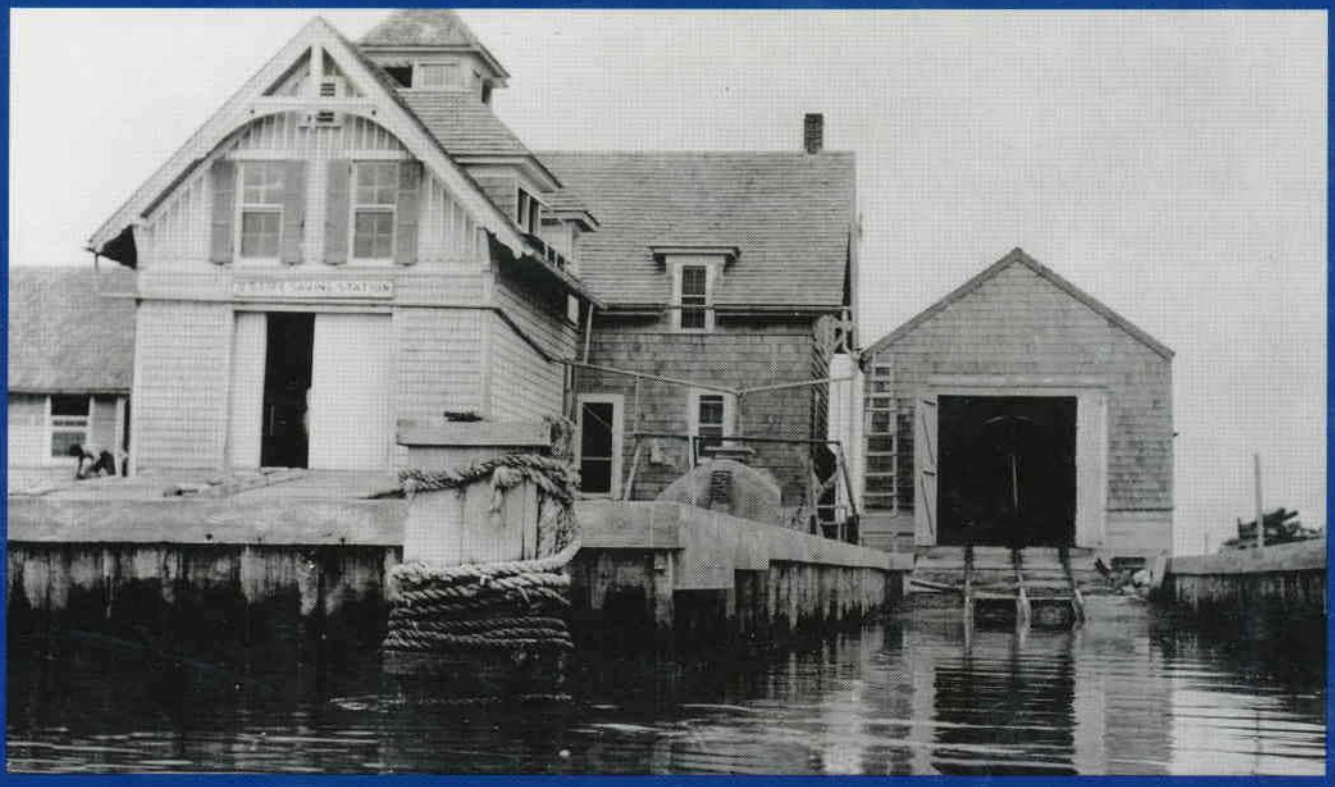


Ron M. Kagawa, ASLA, is Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture at the Virginia Tech College of Architecture and Urban Studies, Washington-Alexandria Architecture Center in Alexandria, Virginia. He holds an undergraduate degree in Landscape Architecture from the University of Texas-Arlington and a graduate degree in Architecture from Virginia Tech. He is a Landscape Architect and currently resides in Arlington, Virginia, with his wife, Landscape Architect, Jill E. Yuran.

James Richard (Rick) Kellam is an Eastern Shore native whose family lineage can be traced back to the 1700s as residents of Hog Island, Virginia. His grandparents, Ella Mae and John Samuel Melvin, were residents of the Village of Broadwater on Hog Island. He previously worked as a waterman and held the rank of Captain with the Virginia Marine Resources Commission. He attended The College of William and Mary and the United States Coast Guard Maritime Law Enforcement School. Rick is a well-known Eastern Shore historian and extraordinary artifact collector. He is currently the owner of Broadwater Bay Eco-tours and resides near Exmore, Virginia, with his wife, Connie K. Kellam.

Amine Cosby Kellam, a author of *Once a Shoreman* and *A Shoreman's Travel Tales*, was born on the Eastern Shore of Virginia where she has lived most of her life. She holds a B.A. degree from Wittenberg University and a Master of Arts degree from The Ohio State University. She received the 1973 Delacy Gray Medal for Conservation by the Garden Club of Virginia, was Eastern Shore Citizen of the Year in 1981, and received the 1984 Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson Award by Keep America Beautiful, Inc. and the 2000 Melba H. Massie Award—Virginia's highest award for beautification. Mrs. Kellam is the great-great-granddaughter of Nathan Fosque Cobb Sr. She presently resides at Lochwood in Northampton County, Virginia.

ISBN 1-57864-211-6



THE
DONNING COMPANY
PUBLISHERS